

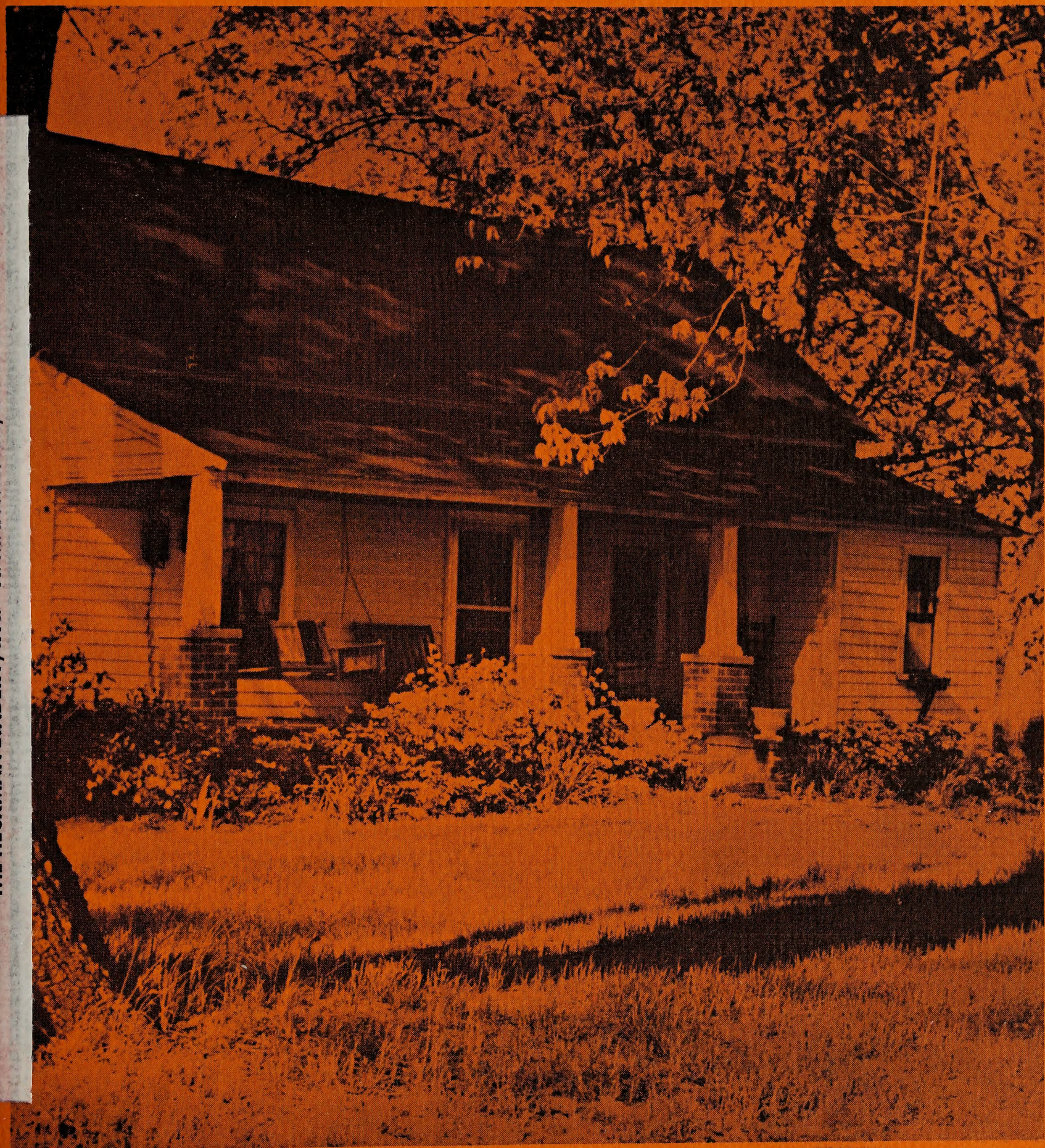
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The *North Carolina Folklore Journal* publishes studies of North Carolina folklore and folklife, analyses of the use of folklore in literature, and articles whose rigorous methodology or innovative approach is pertinent to local folkloristics. Manuscripts should conform to the *MLA Handbook*. Quotations from oral narratives should be transcriptions of recorded versions and should be identified by teller, place, and date.



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Illustrations, *Norma Farthing Murphy.*

Front Cover: The William Eli Taylor House today, Bear Grass,
Martin County, N.C. (Photo by Elmer Taylor Malone, Jr.)

1979 Student Contest Awards

The awards for the North Carolina Folklore Society's annual student contest honor two distinguished long-time members of the Society and former faculty members at Appalachian State University—W. Amos Abrams and Cratis D. Williams. Providing cash prizes for each winner is shared by the North Carolina Folklore Society and the Appalachian State University Foundation.

Cratis D. Williams Prize:

Best Essay by a Graduate Student

"The William Eli Taylor House: 1892

Elmer Taylor Malone, Jr.

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

W. Amos Abrams Prize:

Best Essay by an Undergraduate Student

"Memories of a Folk Doctor: Dr. Cicero West"

Carol Shaw

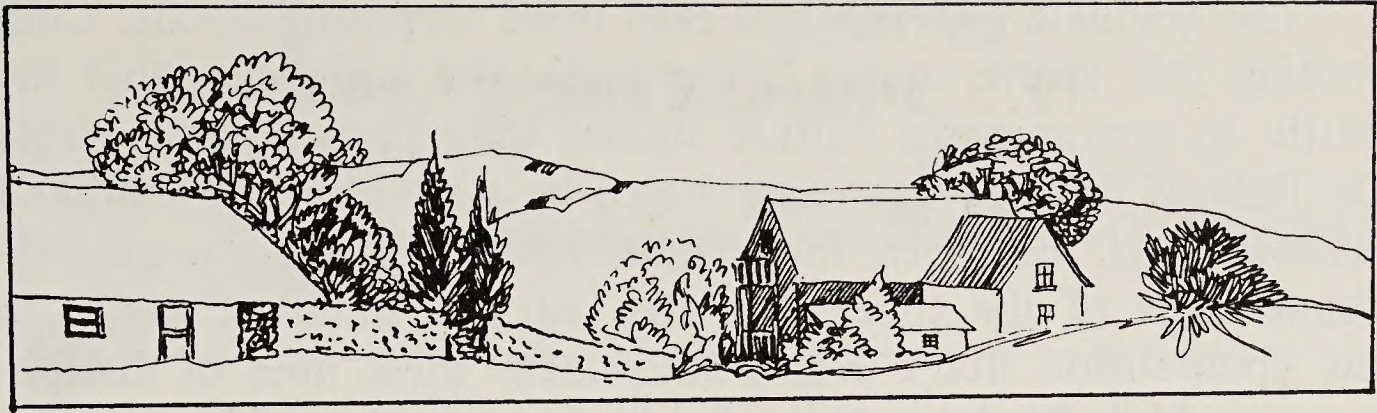
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Honorable Mention:

"A Hog Killing in Eastern North Carolina"

Sylvie Houbart

East Carolina University



Reviewing the 1979 Student Contest Essays

by Charles Camp

As a folklorist who, unlike most of his colleagues, spends little time in a classroom, I greatly enjoyed the opportunity to read and judge the student papers submitted for the 1979 folklore competition. Before announcing the awards, I would like to offer some general comments about the papers I read and the worthiness of the contest itself.

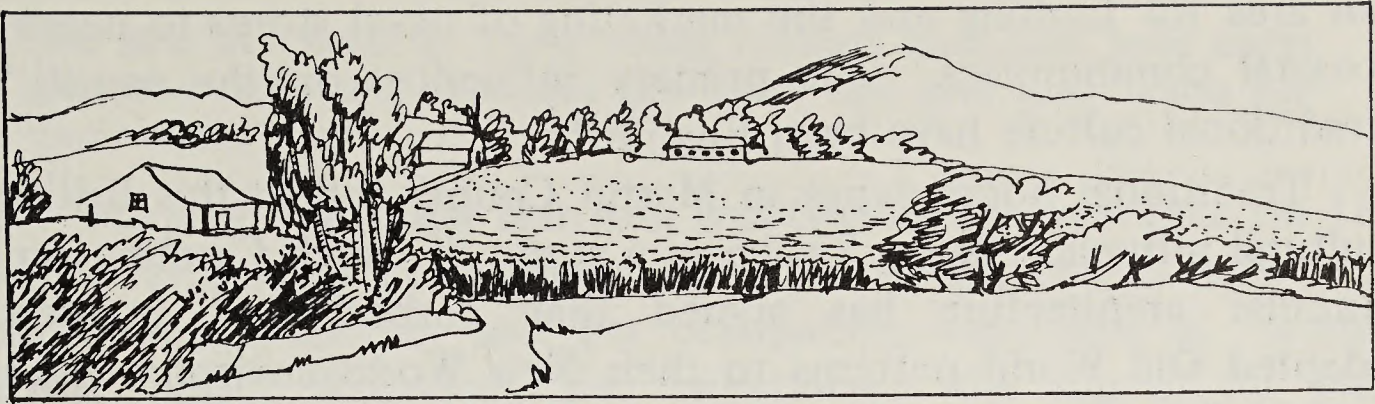
In reading the undergraduate papers, I was struck by the lack of self-consciousness with which the authors presented tales and points of view from their own experience, and, in several cases, shifted from recollection to objective analysis with seeming ease. I do not recall my undergraduate collecting expeditions to have been experiences comfortably reported or painlessly analyzed. These experiences were filled with bad road directions, flat tires, and ill-behaved tape recorders; the products of my research never seemed to capture the spirit of the people I met or the feel of the places I had visited. The undergraduate papers make me wonder whether today's students are so much better at their work than those of my undergraduate days (way back in the early 1970s), or whether modern technology has finally perfected the crafts of marking dirt roads, maintaining tire pressure, and manufacturing a student-proof tape recorder.

Charles Camp is the State Folklorist for Maryland.

The graduate papers reveal even more surprising trends. Until reading this year's entries, I was under the impression that the battle to give material culture studies their proper place within the field of folklore was being waged by a handful of established scholars, and that even they could find little hope in the academic signs of the times. Yet the two best graduate papers in the competition don't even acknowledge these lines of disciplinary warfare. Their authors simply address their chosen topics with clear vision, ingenuity, and a sense of detail which is frequently lacking in those material culture studies which have reached print. I am particularly impressed by the authors' avoidance of the easy answers provided by the strict application of a single methodology or school of theory. There were no Proppian analyses of folk art or Jungian readings of Halloween customs among the papers I read—a happy circumstance for which I congratulate the entrants and for which I am personally grateful.

The winners, then: the W. Amos Abrams Prize for the best undergraduate paper goes to "Memories of a Folk Doctor: Dr. Cicero West." The paper displays a real understanding of the social chemistry involved in the practice of medicine and the proper means for investigating this chemistry. The best graduate paper, winner of the Cratis D. Williams Prize, is "The William Eli Taylor House: 1892." The idea of interviewing people to learn about something more than the floorplan of an old house is well-accepted in Europe, but has yet to be generally recognized here. The ease with which the winning essay welds objective description of a house with the interpretive statements of its former residents should help dispel doubts about the worthiness of the interview method in folk architectural studies. Honorable Mention in the graduate category goes to "A Hog Killing in Eastern North Carolina," a thoughtful and observant treatment of an event infrequently understood as a socially as well as domestically functional occasion.

The fine papers I have read for this competition speak highly of their authors, and also of the health of folklife studies within the state of North Carolina. I offer my congratulations to the winners, my condolences to the non-winners, and a vote of confidence for the Society and Appalachian State University in recognition of their sponsorship of this worthy contest.



Cratis D. Williams Prize

The William Eli Taylor House: 1892

by Elmer Taylor Malone, Jr.

Investigating the architecture and history of the William Eli Taylor House in Martin County has provided two important research opportunities for me. First, the house offers a test case for a theory of folk architecture, the hypothesis that the English hall-and-parlor house was modified by North Carolinians to fit their New World environment. Secondly, looking at the evolution of the house and the social, economic, and familial factors affecting that evolution has presented me personally with a richer appreciation of my ancestors who occupied this old home.

The William Eli Taylor House is located in the Bear Grass section of Martin County, North Carolina, about twenty miles northeast of Greenville. Martin, an early North Carolina county, was established in 1774. Sitting at the base of a peninsula between Roanoke and Albemarle Sounds with the Roanoke River as its northern boundary, since colonial times it has been

Elmer Taylor Malone, Jr., is a graduate student in the Curriculum in Folklore at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He wrote his prize-winning essay as part of a course with Charles Zug, III.

an area for farming and the marketing of naval stores to nearby coastal communities.¹ The primary influences on the county's traditional culture have been English.²

Traditional house types in Martin County reflect this British cultural influence. Doug Swaim in a study of North Carolina vernacular architecture has argued that Tarheel folk builders adapted Old World patterns to their New World environment, a process he calls the "place-related inflection of culture."³ Of the variety of types available in the folk builder's repertoire, most plans were "not indigenous in the sense of having originated here"; however, "locally standard modifications evolved which better fitted them to their North Carolina context."⁴ The basic pattern of the William Eli Taylor House, the hall-and-parlor house of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century rural England and Ireland, has undergone such adaptation to local needs and the setting of the Carolina Coastal Plain.

The history of the W.E. Taylor-Ellis Malone farm on which the Taylor House was built is an important background to understanding the familial, social, and economic influences on the house's architecture. That history begins with David B. Harrison, born in 1801, who was Martin County's census taker in 1860. A farmer, he and his wife Nicey were parents to at least ten surviving children, including four sons—John, Lovick, Joseph, and Chushen.⁵ Others may have lived in different households for a family source states that they had sixteen children.⁶ It was traditional in the family and community to bequeath land to one's sons and personal property, including slaves, to daughters. In 1976 Ruby Malone Rejuney of Arlington, Virginia, a great-granddaughter of David B. Harrison, wrote a seventy-one page memoir of her childhood and young adulthood on the Taylor-Malone farm. In it she describes how her maternal grandmother, Arrenia Harrison, acquired the land.

When my great-grandfather began to age ... he decided to make preparations for the future of his many children. There were eight boys and eight girls. Since he had much land and many slaves, he made a will which provided that the land be divided and given to the boys. The slaves he bequeathed to his "belles." Not long after his death the Civil War fouled up his well-made plans. When the slaves were freed,

the girls had nothing. Those young brothers must have been pretty compassionate; they redivided the estate and gave their sisters portions of the land.⁷

“Aroney” (Arrenia Harrison was twenty-two years old on 18 July 1860, when her father entered her on the census rolls. She was living at home, and her occupation was listed as “seamstress.” Slade Rogerson, also twenty-two, the son of Eli and Subrina Rogerson, lived in the same census district and was a “day laborer” while residing on his father’s farm.⁸ Slade and Arrenia were married about the time of the outbreak of the Civil War. On 25 April 1862 in Williamston, county seat of Martin, Slade Rogerson enlisted in the Roanoke Grays, a unit which became Company A, 17th Regiment N.C. Troops.⁹ In late 1864 or early 1865, while home on leave, Slade became ill. According to a family tradition, when it was time for him to return to his duty station at Tarboro, Arrenia, however, was determined that he would fulfill his obligation. All horses and mules on the place had been taken by soldiers, but one old blind horse was left. She hitched that horse to a wagon padded with quilts and alone transported her husband to the banks of the Tar River, about thirty miles from her home. She never saw him alive again.¹⁰ Ruby Malone Rejuney completes the story in her memoir: “In Tarboro ... he developed pneumonia and died. A messenger notified my grandmother, and she traveled by horse and cart to claim his body and bring him home for burial.”¹¹

Arrenia and Slade were the parents of a child, Slade Rogerson, Jr., and for awhile after the war the young widow engaged in some commercial use of the Bear Grass Township property she had inherited from her father. Her share was all virgin timber—“mostly pine trees, yet with a big variety of other kinds of trees.” So-called “tar holes” were dug in Reedy Swamp to the north of the eventual house site.¹² According to Arrenia’s granddaughter:

Grandma tapped the pines for commercial use of the sap.... I’ve heard stories of her loading a horse-drawn cart with barrels of sap, taking her small son, Slade Rogerson, and driving with the cargo to Washington, North Carolina, where she could sell it, and it would be shipped out from the big Tar River. It would take her at least two days to cover the distance of the approximately twenty-two miles each way.¹³

Arrenia's second husband, nine years her junior, shared her devotion to the Confederacy. William Eli Taylor, born in 1846, apparently lied about his age when he enlisted on 1 May 1861 in the original Roanoke Grays, Company F. He was captured in the fall of Fort Hatteras on 29 August 1861 and remained in Federal prison camps in New York and Boston harbors for about six months until officially exchanged on 20 February 1862.¹⁴ Back home, he re-enlisted on 20 March 1862 in the re-organized local unit, now called Company A, which Slade Rogerson, Arrenia's son, was to join a month later. W.E. Taylor deserted around 5 November 1863, but returned to service. He was hospitalized at Petersburg, Virginia, in 1864 and was captured by Yankee troops in the Confederate hospital in Raleigh on 13 April 1865.¹⁵ Company records had listed him as being twenty-two on 21 March 1862. He was actually only sixteen then. When his war experiences were all over—after four years of battle, imprisonment, the trauma of desertion, return, illness, and hospitals—he was only nineteen. In 1869 W.E. Taylor and Arrenia Harrison Rogerson were married.¹⁶

Taylor, according to his granddaughter Mrs. Rejuney, "was a good farmer but was illiterate, as most of the farmers were then." His daughters spoke of him as being a tough, hard-working person, but "kind and good to his family." He wanted to learn to read, so Arrenia, using the Bible as a textbook, taught him. He would insist that the children gather around him at night to hear him read; no one dared object openly to his demands, although they all felt the ritual to be unnecessary.¹⁷

The 1900 census, taken in Bear Grass Township on 6 June, lists W.E. Taylor as a farmer who owned his property free of mortgage—a significant fact in light of the difficult economic times then for farmers in the state. He could read, the enumerator reported, but could not write.¹⁸

Fate presented W.E. Taylor with an unforeseen difficulty in running his farm. He and Arrenia had three daughters. Their only son, Jesse, left home to go into business in another county. Arrenia's son, Slade Rogerson, who was always called "Brother Slade" by his younger half-sisters, went to work as a traveling salesman for a fruit tree company.¹⁹ Martin County was cotton

country, and national overproduction of that staple caused continually falling prices. Cotton fell from twenty-five cents a pound in 1868 to seven cents in the early nineties, finally reaching five cents a pound in 1894.²⁰ Despite the prospect of hard times, Taylor and his kin constructed three two-room plan folk dwellings on the old Harrison property in the 1890s.

The only one of the three which can be dated with any certainty is the central “great house.” It was built in 1892. Ruby Malone Rejuney describes that structure:

When Mama [Pennie M. Taylor—born 16 October 1879] was about thirteen years old, my grandparents decided to build a house on Grandma’s property.... [It] consisted of five rooms.... It was a two-story structure; the two upstairs bedrooms were really a “jump” or attic-type rooms with low ceilings. There were no closets until much later. On the front of the house was a lovely and long spacious porch extending all the way across, except for a small “piazza” room closed in on the south side.²¹ [See Fig. 1]



Fig. 1. The “Great House” circa 1905. Left to right, standing: W.E. Taylor, Reuben Rogerson, Ellis Malone, Sarah N. Taylor, Silver Belle Taylor, P.H. Wobleton; seated: unidentified, Arrenia Harrison Taylor, Bessie Arrenia Malone, Pennie Taylor Malone.

The “great house” fits Henry Glassie’s description of the distinctive hall-and-parlor, one-room deep folk house type. This type was common in the source area of the Chesapeake Tidewater, “running from Baltimore down the coast to North Carolina’s Albemarle Sound and rising inland to the foot of the Blue Ridge in Virginia.”²² Behind it was a separate frame building which contained the kitchen, dining room, and pantry. There was a fireplace for cooking in the kitchen.²³

The property line ran close to the house on the west side. Just over the line, about eighty yards from the “great house,” was a small two-room dwelling in which one of Arrenia’s sisters or other female relatives lived.²⁴ Later, sometime around 1899 or 1900, another hall-and-parlor house was built about a quarter of a mile east of the W.E. Taylor property. It was of balloon frame construction (built of small wooden members nailed together rather than using heavy beams), one story, one-room deep, with central hallway, wooden shingles on the roof, and a wattle and daub chimney—an unusual feature at this late date. The house burned before World War I.²⁵



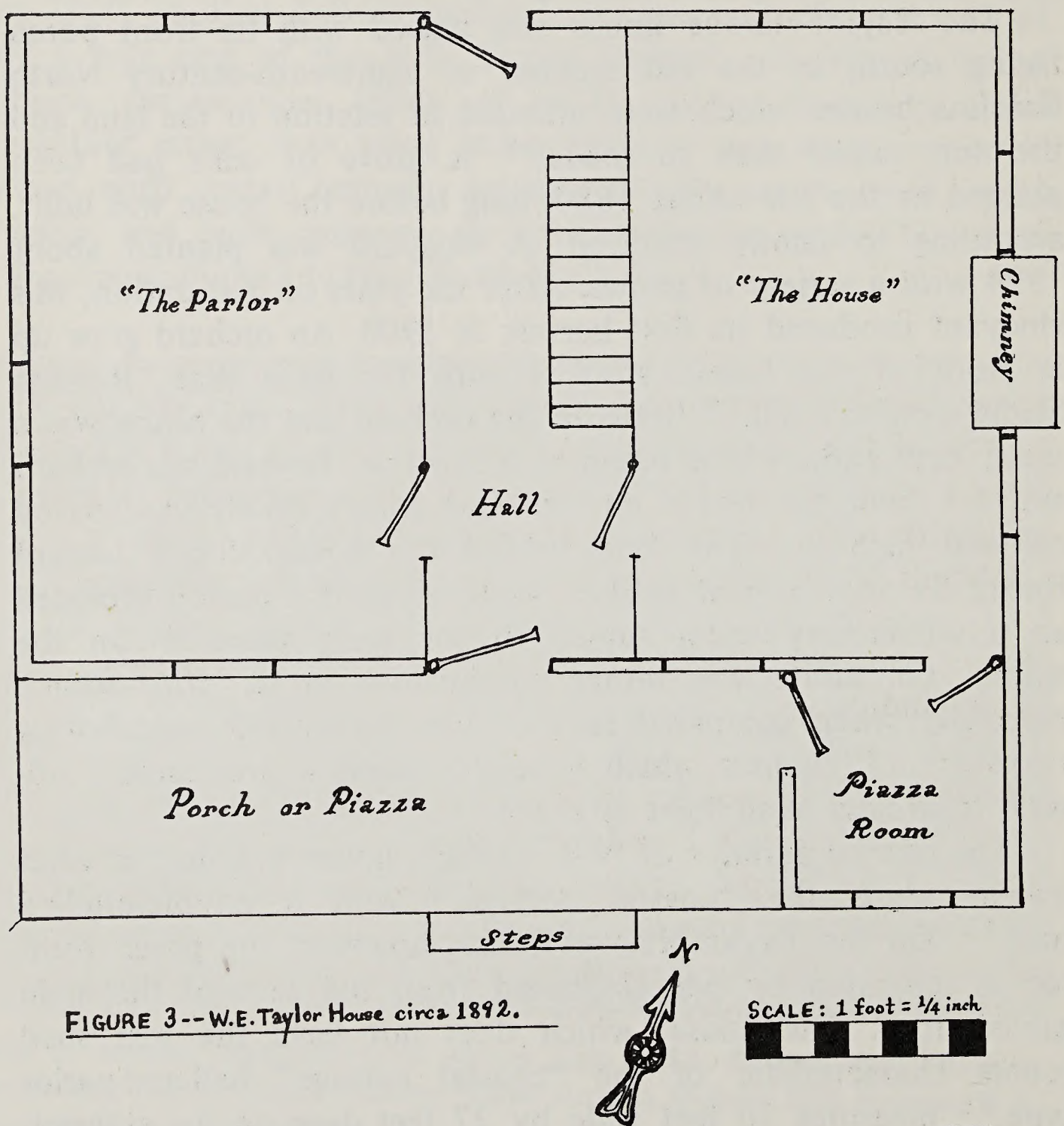
Fig. 2. Smaller Hall-and-Parlor House circa 1905. Left to right: Reuben Rogerson, Pennie Taylor Malone, Bessie Arrenia Malone, Ellis Malone, W.E. Taylor, Vernon Lea Malone.

What were the builders of the "great house" like? Who, in fact, were they? W.E. Taylor had been farming for almost thirty years by the time he constructed his 1892 hall-and-parlor house. He was skilled as a blacksmith, repairing farm equipment and shoeing horses and mules.²⁶ He was not experienced, beyond the ordinary, in carpentry, but there is no family memory of any outsider being involved in the construction of the house. According to Ruby Malone Rejuney, "This work [clearing the land and building] was done in Grandpa's spare time from farming several miles away.... It was done mostly by hand, and they moved in when there was just weather-boarding. As time passed they made improvements as they could."²⁷

The Taylor-Malone house was placed with its front porch facing south, in the old manner of eighteenth-century North Carolina houses which were oriented in relation to the land and the sun rather than to roads.²⁸ A grove of oaks had been planted at the site about 1880, long before the house was built, according to family tradition. A vineyard was planted about 1894 with a variety of grapes. After six years of maturation, this vineyard produced its first harvest in 1900. An orchard grew up in front of the house, stocked with the trees that "Brother Slade" couldn't sell.²⁹ Between the orchard and the house was a sandy cart path, which began as a turnrow. Beyond the orchard and far from the house ran the Old King's Road, an unpaved colonial highway. The land behind the house sloped toward Reedy Swamp. Several shallow wells of short duration provided an unsatisfactory water supply in the early years.³⁰ On the whole, the house was rather conservative in its orientation—especially when compared to the more fashionable neighboring two-story "I" houses which generally faced a proximate roadway, regardless of sunlight or shade.³¹

The general exterior of W.E. Taylor's house was that of what Swaim terms the "coastal cottage," with a double-pitched roof.³² On the Taylor-Malone House, however, the porch rooftop is separated by one clapboard from the eave of the main gabled roof. The house, which does not have the rear shed rooms characteristic of the "coastal cottage" hall-and-parlor type,³³ measures 30 feet wide by 27 feet deep on the exterior.

The original porch and house roofs were covered with wooden shingles cut from native cypress. The family spent a lot of time in the early days repairing the shingles, which were sometimes used to spank W.E.'s grandchildren.³⁴ The broad front porch, a place for socializing and music, was structurally integrated—fully engaged to the house—rather than being merely an appendage (see Fig. 4). The presence of a porch was typical of all but the earliest hall-and-parlor houses in eastern North Carolina, the porch having first been consistently added to English dwellings in the British West Indies.³⁵ An end bay of the porch was enclosed to form an unusual frontal “piazza room” (see Fig. 4).



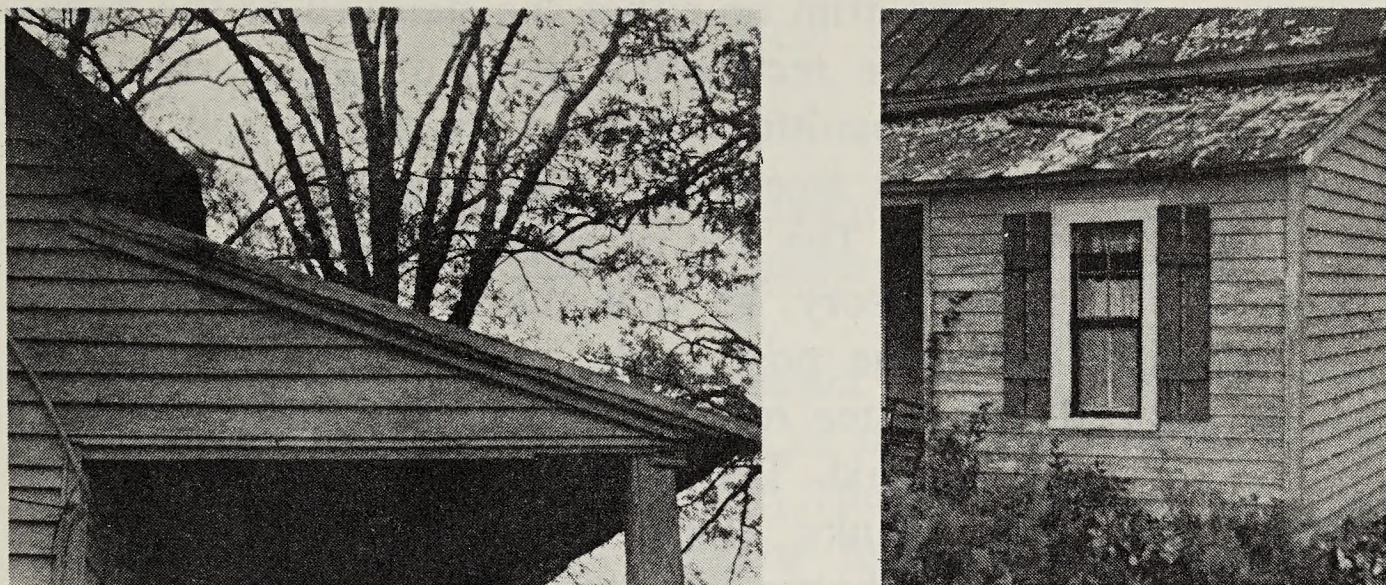


Fig. 4. Details of Porch or Piazza. The porch is fully engaged to the house's main structure and includes a piazza room at the front of the house. Shutters were added in the 1950s.

When such rooms were added it was usually to rear shed porches.³⁶ The original columns or supports appear to have been thin, straight posts about 2 by 4 inches in size. Three held up the porch corner, while two each stood on either side of the steps directly before the front door. Finally, in its one apparent concession to the Victorian madness going on elsewhere, this otherwise anachronistic dwelling displayed two lines of hand-carved, lace-like gingerbread molding along the front and side of the top of the porch. Rocking chairs are present in a 1905 photograph and remain to this day. A chain-suspended wooden swing with room for three adults was added in the 1930s.

Details of the interior of the house include the following:

Floors: Six-inch heart pine planks are used for flooring upstairs and down.

Molding: Floor molding in the original five rooms consists of simple 12-inch base boards with shoe molding at the bottom and a 1 by ½ inch grooved strip capping and slightly overhanging the base boards. The upstairs walls have shoe molding at the top, and the downstairs walls are topped by machine-turned 3 inch molding added in 1944. The walls probably originally had no molding at the top.

Stairway: There is no trim on either the stairwell or the banister; the railing is one rectangular piece of wood, rounded slightly on top. The banister rungs are all square and rather short. The stairway is steep, 26½ inches wide, with eleven steps 8¾ inches deep. The top of the railing is cut into the floor of the second story, so that the railing and banisters stop at floor level. The post at the bottom of the railing is square, topped with three rectangular blocks of wood stacked to form a crude pyramid. The stairway is built against a wall formed of 9 inch planks. Under the stairs, which descend toward the rear of the house, is a small closet.

Mantles: The original fireplace is framed by flush boards. The mantle, 59½ inches high and 59 inches wide, consists of a plank whose outer corners are rounded. The fire opening is 48 inches wide and 39 inches wide. A false mantle, similar in dimensions and shape, was constructed after World War II in the parlor to mask an oil stove flue.

Doors: Each of the original five rooms has a batten door composed of four to six vertical boards held together by horizontal strips.³⁷ Doors open onto the hallway downstairs, the landing upstairs, and from the piazza room to the "fireplace" room and onto the front porch. The door to a small closet under the staircase is also of batten construction. A rotating peg on a nail at the upper left hand corner of the frame holds this door closed. The larger doors have white porcelain knobs, and the hall doors downstairs have square iron locks. The wood in the doors is heart pine.

Windows: All window frames are the same size, 34½ inches wide by 54 inches tall, with the exception of two smaller windows upstairs on either side of the chimney on the east gable. The original glass has bubbles and flaws. The standard-sized windows have twelve panes, six up and six down. The frames are not mitered. Pegs were used to hold the sashes in warm weather.

Ceilings: All original ceilings were composed of 3½ inch tongue and groove boards.

Walls: All original walls were constructed of 3½ inch tongue and groove boards. There are no plaster walls in the house.

Underpinning: The house has a raised open foundation, a feature Swaim sees as an adaptation of the hall-and-parlor house type to the New World context.³⁸ The Taylor House has four 12-inch-square handhewn sills. The fully engaged porch rests on the same sills and joists which support the house. The sills are about 30 inches off the ground with the foundation open. The original house was underpinned with huge wooden triangles set on their sides, rather than with rocks. According to Keathley Land Malone, wife of Roy Clifton Malone, the present owner and grandson of W.E. Taylor, the underpinning was cypress wood: "They used that for a lot of things. It wouldn't rot easily, and there was plenty of it on the farm. There weren't any rocks to use. There's not a rock on this place—not even in the creeks."³⁹

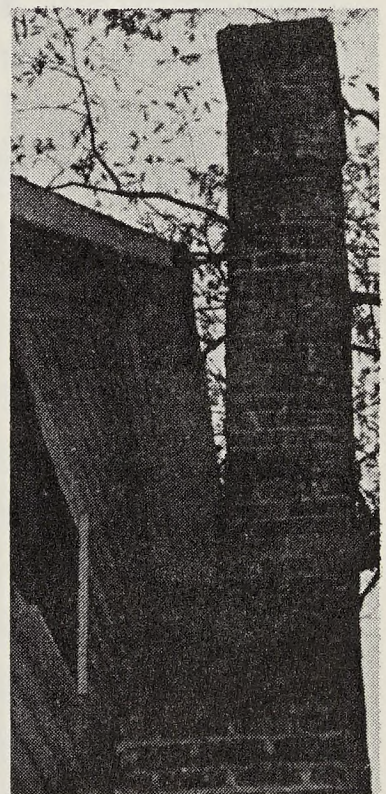


Fig. 5. East Gable End. The "coastal cottage" has its chimney centered and set slightly away from the gable at the top, a typical southern coastal feature.

The original chimney was centered on the east gable end, a characteristic English feature,⁴⁰ and was "set slightly away from the gable at the top ... typical of the southern coast"⁴¹ (see Fig. 5). Although most chimneys were "built of stone to the shoulders and topped with brick in all of the eastern regions,"⁴² this one is all brick. A crude, new chimney was built on the west gable between 1940 and 1960 to accomodate upstairs and downstairs oil flues. A square hole, originally a flue hole, is cut in the parlor ceiling about three feet from the west wall.

Of the two main rooms downstairs the parlor was slightly larger (12 feet wide and 19 feet deep with a 22½ foot diagonal) and was confined to more formal uses. Religious services, including the baptism of children, took place in the parlor. According to Roy Clifton Malone, the room across the hall was called "the house": "Most of the time we sat in 'the house,' which Mama and Papa sometimes called 'the fireplace room.'"⁴³ This was the house as it looked and functioned from about 1892 to 1910. It was built with an asymmetrical two-room plan, the fireplace room measuring 19 feet long but only 10 feet 11 inches wide.⁴⁴ The hall is 6 feet 3 inches wide and 19 feet long.

Ellis Malone, son of a former superintendent of the flavoring department of Blackwell's Tobacco Company in Durham, came to Martin County about 1897 or 1898 "to help people learn to grow tobacco."⁴⁵ While working for Reuben Rogerson, whose field adjoined that of W.E. Taylor, he probably met Taylor's youngest daughter, Pennie. While the older girls, Sarah and Belle, "always worked in the house, MaLone [as Pennie came to be known after her marriage] always worked in the fields with her father."⁴⁶ The 1900 census lists Taylor's household as consisting of the farmer, his wife Arrenia, daughters Sarah, thirty (occupation "seamstress"), Belle, twenty-six ("seamstress"), and Pennie, twenty ("laborer"). Another member of the household was E. Malone, twenty-three ("Laborer").⁴⁷

Nannie May Tilley in *The Bright Tobacco Industry 1860-1929*, discussing the spread of tobacco cultivation from the piedmont to the coastal plain, writes that the 1890s "witnessed a very decided shift from cotton to tobacco.... Methods of introducing the new crop [included] the hiring of Old Belt

growers as teachers ... tutors from the Old Belt swarmed over the coastal plains." She observes, "tobacco culture was a closed book and years of instruction were needed."⁴⁸ In 1886, for example, five Pitt County farmers "jointly engaged a 'Granville expert' to instruct them in growing and curing Bright Tobacco."⁴⁹

On 3 October 1900 Ellis Malone, the "Granville expert," and Pennie Taylor were married. Pennie picked grapes throughout her wedding day and was married that night. After the marriage they lived in the hall-and-parlor house with the wattle and daub chimney located east of the great house. After moving for one farm season to Chocowinity in western Beaufort County to work on a relative's land, Ellis and family—"because Pennie didn't like it down there"—returned to Bear Grass.⁵⁰ Pennie's parents died—Arrenia on 3 May 1908 and W.E. on 12 April 1909⁵¹—and her sister Belle's first husband bought the farm. Then he died, and Belle sold the farm to Pennie for \$1,000.⁵²

"After my parents purchased the place, they enclosed the area between the two buildings [house and kitchen] and made a bedroom for the boys. This was always called the 'new room.' Bess and I slept upstairs," wrote Ruby Malone Rejuney.⁵³ Her brother, Roy Clifton Malone, also remembered the creation of the "ell," which survived from 1910 to 1944.

Two rooms were added between the old kitchen and the house. That was done before my time. The room closest to the house was the boys' bedroom, and between that room and the kitchen was the dining room. A walkway ran alongside these three rooms. It was called "the porch." We boys spoke of going "in the house" when we went from these three rooms into the main part.⁵⁴

Swaim speaks of the "ell" as the heart, the seat of the cultural memory of a house. After the Civil War, he writes, "kitchen and dining spaces were generally incorporated into it." The back porch was where "the family performed winter chores in the sun."⁵⁵ So it was with the "ell" on the Taylor-Malone House. Old photographs clearly show its batten siding. Ruby Malone Rejuney recounts, "We used to be able to almost tell the time of day by the sunshine reaching the row of nails on the floor of the porch. When it reached a certain row, it was about 1:30 P.M., which meant it was time to ring the dinner bell for those working in the fields."⁵⁶

Swaim mentions that often small folk dwellings were eventually converted to outbuildings.⁵⁷ The Reverend Jesse Leon Malone, brother of Ruby and Roy Clifton ("Tim"), remembered such an instance.

The barn behind Tim's house now used to be a dwelling house. Some folk kin to MaLone lived there, but sometime between 1910 and 1915 they left and we turned it around longways to use for a barn. But first it was a garage for the old Ford. We took out the floor and made a big opening on the end. The car would just fit in there, and there was a little space left on the end so you could work on it and stay out of the rain.⁵⁸

The "garden house" or "WPA" was another outbuilding which was moved closer to the house. The smokehouse also changed positions, shifting from west to east.⁵⁹

During the 1920s and thirties the house and its rooms were connected with the community's religious and educational history. Members of the family helped organize and sustain Holy Trinity Episcopal Mission during this time. Services were held in the parlor until a small structure called the "Mission House" was constructed nearby.⁶⁰ Pennie Taylor had not come from an Episcopal background—her parents were Primitive Baptists—and the extremely "Low Church" informality of the mission services led family members to nickname the new structure "Pennie's Chapel." Besides this religious connection, the house also was connected with local education, for during the 1930s school teachers boarded in the upstairs bedroom.⁶¹

In 1944 the house acquired its present form when the old "ell" and back porch were removed and replaced by a new dining room, kitchen, pantry, indoor bathroom, small bedroom, and new screened-in back porch. The house received its first coat of exterior paint during these alterations in 1944.⁶² Old photographs also show that during the 1940s the front porch pillars evolved to what look like 4 by 4 inch posts and then to shorter wooden pillars on brick pedestals.

With the passing of time the Taylor-Malone House has changed with the needs of new generations and with the times. Its history presents a look at the development of North Carolina folk architecture and at the growth of a Martin County family. When built in the 1890s W.E. Taylor's new house was produced

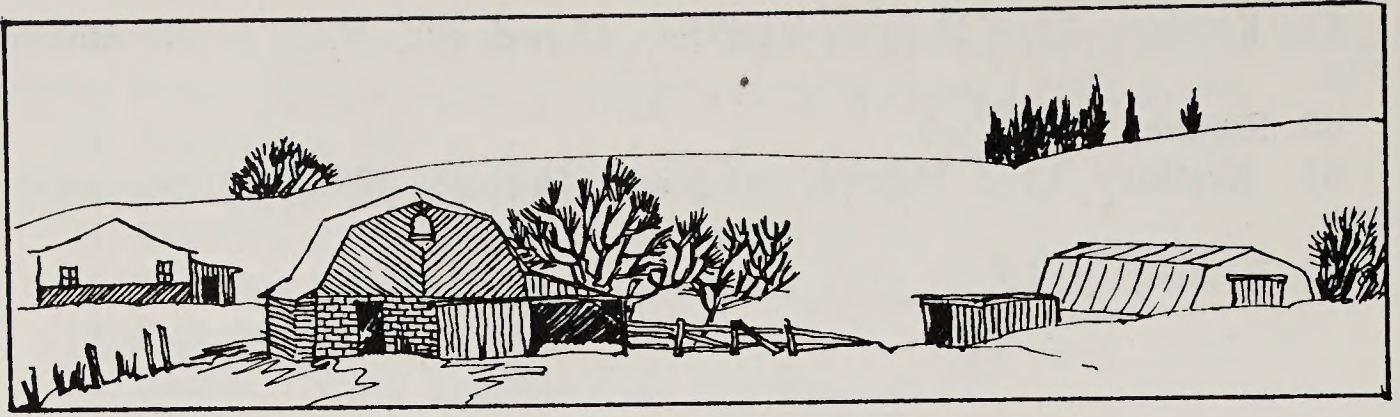
by traditional tools and techniques. Its architectural pattern was a form with a long-standing tradition, a form acceptable to its non-professional builder and to his community. The hall-and-parlor structure in Bear Grass has changed from 1892 to 1980, but it still retains its European pattern, adapted by the genius of the common people to a new world. The house has helped produce an environment with deep meaning for several generations of people. It has been the site of experiences which forever create a lingering image—a sense of place. It has become symbolic of a wholeness that confirms our family's continued existence.

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18. 1900 Census.
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25. Keathley Land Malone, 5 November 1978.
26. Keathley Land Malone, 5 November 1978.
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32. Swaim, "North Carolina Folk Housing," p. 36.
33. Swaim, "North Carolina Folk Housing," p. 34.
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36. Swaim, "North Carolina Folk Housing," p. 36.
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W. Amos Abrams Prize

Memories of a Folk Doctor: Dr. Cicero West

by Carol Shaw

An obituary in the *Raleigh News and Observer* for 9 November 1942 notes the death of Cicero West:

WAKE MAN DIES AT AGE OF 92

Funeral Services Near Erwin
this Afternoon at 2 p m.
for A. C. West

Carol Shaw, an undergraduate at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, wrote her study of Dr. Cicero West for a folklore course with Daniel Patterson, Jr.

A. C. West, who for years prescribed for and treated many people of this State and other states, died Saturday night at 9:45 o'clock at his home on Apex, Route 1. He was 82.

The people of his section knew him as Dr. West, though he was not a licensed physician. Many people who had been treated by him praised his work highly.

He had been in active health until two or three weeks ago. He was a native of Sampson County, lived near Lillington for many years and had lived near Apex for about four years.¹

But this brief notice barely touches on the amazing career of this native North Carolinian. While most folk doctors were being berated by licensed doctors and unbelievers, Dr. Cicero West commanded general respect. He had his share of problems with the law like other folk doctors, but we cannot ignore the large number of people he helped. Dr. West was more than just a doctor to his patients; he was a hero to them, and even thirty-eight years after his death, he has not been forgotten.

In my research on Dr. West I primarily depended on the memories of his family, neighbors, and former patients to provide some understanding of him. Some of my informants were very close to Dr. West: Fred West, his nephew, who farmed for him; Alice Pate, his second wife, who lived with him until his death; and five members of the Bobbitt family who grew up across the road from his home in Harnett County and saw him on a day-to-day basis.² My other informants were Mrs. Mary Spencer, Miss Louisa Law, and J.R. Sail, who did business with Dr. West, and Mrs. Beth Traxler, a patient.³ After discussing Dr. West with these people, I began to develop a picture of him; the stories of his faithful believers merged with anecdotes from the less faithful who acknowledge his cures, but still wonder how he did them.

A chronology of Cicero West's life is impossible to establish because no one remembers the exact dates of events or even the order in which they occurred. Local folk just remember events happening. Rather than trying to follow an orderly sequence of events, I have concentrated on certain separate episodes and themes that affected his change from simple local man to well-known folk doctor.

Very little is known about Dr. West's early childhood. My informants only remembered the last twenty-five years of his life; he was already an old man when they met him. He was born in 1850 in West's Crossing in Sampson County, North Carolina. West's Crossing is now Spivey's Corner, but during the nineteenth century, the area was owned by the West family.⁴ No one knows when Dr. West moved to Harnett County, and there are two different stories about why he left Sampson County. Three of the Bobbitt boys—Ed, Ben, and Brad—remember sneaking away from their work to listen to Cicero's stories about the bootlegging days. Ed Bobbitt interprets these stories to mean that Dr. West had been bootlegging in Sampson County and was asked to leave there for good or be put in jail.⁵ The other story comes from Dr. West's nephew Fred, who believes Dr. West moved in order to live with his first wife, Miss Charity, on land which she had inherited in Harnett County.⁶

Dr. West was still living with Miss Charity on that Harnett County land during the second decade of this century. They lived in an old two-room house with few conveniences; they were quite poor during this time. Cicero had not started doing any of his major doctoring; he made his living by digging ditches, sawmilling, and farming. He lost his right thumb sometime during these early years when he was sawmilling.⁷

Some people say Dr. West got his start as a folk doctor by telling fortunes, curing cattle, and occasionally curing a toothache or taking off warts. His cattle curing business seemed to have prospered for a while; he was called on frequently to cure cows during these days. Buck Sail remembers from his childhood Dr. West coming to his home to check a sick cow. Dr. West walked around the cow, checked the horns, twisted the cow's tail all around, and announced that the cow had "holler tail."

Buck was sent into the house to get some salt and rags. When he came back, Dr. West proceeded to slit one part of the cow's tail which turned out to be hollow with no blood in it. Then he packed the slit with salt and wrapped the tail up with rags. About a half hour later the cow perked up and drank some water. It was completely well by the next day. Ed Bobbitt remarks that some folks believed Cicero's cattle doctoring was foolishness. They felt most cows were just underfed, and after the cow had its treatment the owner would feed it better, which was why it got well.⁸ But, for whatever reasons, cows always got better after Cicero's visits.

The Bobbitt family, who lived across the road from the Wests in Harnett County, have many memories of these days before Dr. West started a big curing business. The boys would sneak over to hear a few stories, then their father would catch up with them and send them back to work. Sometimes they would get a slice of Miss Charity's blueberry pie and listen to more of Cicero's wild tales.⁹ He would finish telling one story and look over at Miss Charity, saying "Ain't that so?" She would smile and say, "I wouldn't know, Cicero, I disremember," not agreeing or disagreeing.¹⁰ One memory of Cicero is general: he was always chewing tobacco, which stained his moustache as the juice dribbled out of the corners of his mouth onto his clothes. Chewing tobacco became his trademark. Gradually, however, Dr. West's medical attention moved from cows to people, and he became known for a lot more than chewing tobacco.

Some important questions arise about his expanded doctoring: Where did he get his knowledge and power to cure people? Was it something he had all along, or did he suddenly discover a cure somewhere? No one can answer these questions with certainty because Dr. West never really discussed the origins of his practice. Occasionally he would tell stories about going to college to learn medicine¹¹ or say he had been to India and eaten wild meat that gave him magic powers.¹² He did have an Indian remedy book at one time. Several people have said they had seen it once or had heard him mention the book. Edna Yett says she remembers writing out an order for an herb book for the Wests, but no one knows if this was the remedy book. Some

people formed their own opinions about his power's source. Miss Alice Pate, his second wife, said, "I think it was a supernatural gift myself," and Brad Bobbitt confirmed this belief when he said, "I have heard a lot of people say that he was a God-sent doctor. People actually believed the Lord sent him here to cure people. Put him here on this earth."

The medicine business started growing bigger and bigger as people began telling their friends about his cures. So many people started coming to see him that Miss Charity had to make the medicine in big wash pots, and Cicero asked some of his family to come live with him to help make the medicine and to collect the herbs with which it was made. Eventually news of his cures reached the ears of doctors and authorities who disapproved of the business. Disfavor caused the Wake County Medical Society to write a letter to the Harnett County Medical Society advising it to get rid of this dangerous man. Miss Law, a county nurse at the time, remembers being asked to pretend she was pregnant and visit Dr. West with another nurse who pretended to be her mother. Miss Law refused to play such a trick, but did go to Dr. West's home to see his business. When they arrived, he was very nice to them, showing them his laboratory and the medicine room. Since he had a patent to sell his medicine, there was nothing the Health Department could do, so the complaint was filed away and forgotten. Miss Law also heard later that the State Superintendent of Health had a friend whose cancer had been cured by Dr. West, which made her think the state official was in no hurry to bother Cicero's business.

Dr. West was very lucky when it came to trouble with the law. He knew he could legally sell his medicine as long as he did not appear to diagnose illnesses. His first major run-in with the law came when he made the mistake of leaving home to sell his medicine. Meg Shoe and Brad Bobbitt remember the details:

MS: He got mixed up with some other doctors down near Goldsboro that wanted to get in on his act. Didn't they go down there or something, and they arrested him?

BB: Well there were two old doctors down in the eastern part of the state. One was Rogers and the other was a Shaverly. They got him down about Goldsboro. I always thought they were trying to find

out what Mr. West was doing. Mr. West was curing people. They got him down there and the State Board of Health got on him and arrested him—Mr. West. They locked him up. But a couple people, Mr. Troy Mathews and Mr. Reid Smith, were character witnesses down there with him. He had as good a character as anyone ever had I reckon. They went down there as state witnesses down there and testified in favor of Mr. West. He just came clean as a whistle.

MS: I heard the courtroom was full of patients.

BB: Oh, my daddy said they could have posted any kind of bond they wanted if they had a-wanted it. The lawyer told his wife Miss Charity—his first wife—[MS *interrupts*: The judge threw it out of court!] to come back home and sell all the medicine she could make— just make it and sell it all she could sell, but don't leave home to do [it]—just stay at home. No law can bother you there if people come there and get it. Just sell it to them. You know that [the court case] was a great advertising for him. He really had business from then on and as long as he lived. He could hardly keep up with it.

After this episode Dr. West sold his medicine and cured those who came to see him without the law troubling him for a long time. But when he moved to the Apex area in Wake County near the end of his life, doctors tried to take him to court for diagnosing without a license. Zeb Young, a lawyer from Greensboro who had been cured by Dr. West, kept the case out of court. Cicero had to curtail some of his activities and change the name of his "heart medicine" to "No. 4" because the name was considered a diagnosis.¹³ The doctors in the area resented him, but they could never stop people from coming to see Dr. West. He was curing people who had been sent home to die by licensed physicians.

Once people began to hear of Dr. West's cures, they started coming to his house in droves every day of the week. Saturday and Sunday were the big days: usually forty or fifty cars lined up in the front yard at one time. Cicero's help issued each car a number to keep the people in order.¹⁴ As some people would leave, others would come and take their places, and Dr. West often saw between two and three hundred people in a big day. Buck Sail, who worked at a service station nearby, can remember constantly giving directions to people looking for Dr. West's

home. Sometimes he told people where to go before they even asked because he could tell that was the information they wanted. Some people would get in line before daybreak. Fred West can remember getting up many mornings and finding five or six cars already waiting. Cicero would eat breakfast, start curing people, and work until eleven o'clock at night. As he got into his eighties, his family tried to get him to stop earlier in the evening, but if someone needed curing, he would do it any time.¹⁵

Most of the people who came were from outside the immediate area; his neighbors were too embarrassed to go to him or never felt the need for help. But Brad Bobbitt remembers a story about a local man who sneaked over to Dr. West:

Mr. Jim Holden had a place on his leg for years and the doctors couldn't cure it. So he snuck through the woods and came over here, and Mr. West cured it. He didn't want anyone to know he came over here, but after Mr. West cured it, he was proud of it. He told everyone. I've heard him tell it.

Obviously this man felt so good about being cured, he didn't care who knew about it.

Some came from as close as Raleigh and Smithfield, but Cicero drew people from all parts of the South.¹⁶ Mrs. Edna Yett, who grew up across the road from him, remembers moving to Statesville after she was married and seeing her neighbors going to visit Dr. West. She had not realized he had become so well-known. A person could walk up and down the lines of cars and see license plates from South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, Georgia, Kentucky, Florida, West Virginia, Maryland, Ohio, Indiana, and even New York.¹⁷ According to one informant school buses full of people came up from South Carolina to see him, and some people were so sick they came in ambulances.¹⁸ He never advertised his business or medicine in any newspaper. These people came because they had heard about his cures by word of mouth.

A range of people who needed help came to see Dr. West: black, white, rich, poor, educated, and uneducated. Class made no difference to him. When he moved to Wake County, his treatment house had two rooms—one for blacks and one for whites. The arrangement was for his customers and not for him-

self because Dr. West would help anyone who needed it. One might think that the rich and educated would have preferred to go to a real doctor, yet Cicero had lawyers and judges visiting him. When a person is told he is going to die and there is no longer any hope, he becomes willing to believe anything that might help him. The poor could not afford a real doctor, and many of the rich had tried conventional medicine without success. Many patients were desperate so that social class was a meaningless consideration. They all had to have faith in Dr. West or face the fact they might die. Death is a great equalizer, and fear of death is too.

While most people remember Dr. West for his cures, others recall how kind he was to persons who needed help. During his early life, Cicero had not been wealthy, but when he started making money, he bought cars and other things to give away to people. Money was not important to him; he never asked for payments and often refused payment. Most of his income came from selling his medicines; he did not charge for visits. Once a group of people from Alabama drove up in an old truck with no money and two flat tires. Dr. West made his nephew take two tires off his own truck to put on their truck, so they could get home. He also gave them a large supply of medicine.¹⁹ Before Dr. West died, he had bought over six hundred acres of land and given away all but two hundred to his different relatives, saving the rest to give to his second wife. According to family members and neighbors, he was so good-hearted that he would lend money or give anything he had to any person.

In 1930 Miss Charity died before Dr. West was able to treat her, ending one part of his life. He remained single until 1937, when he cured and then married his second wife, Miss Alice Pate. She had been fighting amoebic dysentery for two years, but the doctors had given up on her case: Cicero was her last chance. He gave her his medicine and diet and told her to come back in four weeks. Right after she left, he turned around to one of his nieces who was bottling medicine and said, "I'm going to marry that girl." Seven months later Miss Alice had gained twenty pounds and had married Dr. West. He was eighty-six; she twenty-six. Although she was certainly happy to be cured, Miss Alice married Dr. West for love.²⁰ They took good



Dr. West with his second wife whom he married after curing in 1937.

care of each other. He would not let her work hard, and she babied him by “cleaning him up” and making him wear white shirts. When she was through with him, he looked like a real doctor, except he still chewed his tobacco letting it dribble down his chin onto his shirt.²¹ They moved his business to Apex two years later and lived there until he died. His reputation followed him, and he treated many more people. Even after he died people still came to buy the medicine from Miss Alice, but she soon gave up the business because she could not afford to pay the people who made the medicine.²² Dr. West’s life ended, but it was not forgotten.

Dr. West’s cures are of two basic types: some seem quite simple, while others seem miraculous. His minor cures—taking off warts, curing toothaches, and stopping blood—seem trivial when compared to the cure of a cancer. Yet the simple cures are more mysterious because he did not use any herbs or medicine; he reportedly cured these with his mind. The cancer cures seem

more explainable since the herb medicine and strict diet may have had a medical effect. There are no easy answers about Dr. West's cures. When he died, he took his own insights with him, leaving only the observations and memories of neighbors, patients, and family.

His toothache cure appears to be a practice from the early days when he told fortunes and cured cattle. No one mentioned his using this technique after his business grew more prosperous. The details of the cure seem rather dramatic; Ed Bobbitt remembers seeing the toothache cure many times during his childhood:

EB: You may think this is a lie. We had an old telephone line built here—just a community line. The community got together and put it up themselves. It didn't have but two wires on it. And I reckon there 25 or 30 phones on it—people over yonder two or three miles from home from over here. You see we lived right under him like that. They call over to the house and tell you that a certain one in our family has got the toothache. They say it's an eyetooth or jaw tooth, on the left side or the right side one, you know. So it would be upper tooth or lower. And we'd go over and tell him, and he claimed he could cure that tooth and they at home.

We got to going over there and we boys, it got to be funny to us. We go over there you know. Mamma would send us over there and he would have one of these straight chairs, you know, setting there on the floor. And he set there and directly after you'd tell him, directly he'd get shaking like this, and his eyes would roll back in his head. And "kawallop" and right over on the floor he'd fall. And he lay there and have a kicking fit or something. It got funny to us and that person over yonder claimed that tooth quit hurting.

CS: I've heard about things like that!

Meg Shoe: But you saw him have the fit. You saw him have the fit?

EB: Oh yeah! We got to laughing at him. And he got so he'd get up and go over there after that and go into the backroom. He'd do the same thing back there. You could hear him when he fell out of the chair and hit the floor.

CS: Was he muttering under his breath?

EB: No, he weren't saying a thing hisself, just sitting there shaking his head like that till his eyes go to watering, and directly "kawallop" he'd fall out of his chair.

One might think Dr. West was putting on a show to entertain the boys. But his moving into another room to perform the cure after they laughed at him may show that they were disturbing his concentration. His fits may have been the result of his great concentration, because after he was told who had the toothache and which tooth had the pain, he sat very still until the "power" built up inside of him. He supposedly held his breath while doing many of his cures, a practice that may explain his falling on the floor.²³ The most amazing thing about the cure was his ability to aim his power at a person several miles away. The person with the toothache had no way of knowing when the actual cure would occur. Either Cicero actually cured the tooth with his fits, or the people were so convinced their teeth were going to get better, they cured the pain with their faith. If the second answer is true, then why did Dr. West bother to go to such lengths? Perhaps his dramatics were necessary to inspire his patient's faith, but unfortunately no one will ever know if this was Cicero's intention. The important fact is that Cicero believed in himself.

Like any folk doctor, Dr. West could take off warts. His technique was not as dramatic as his toothache cure, but he still seemed to use his mind in wart removals. There are two different accounts of how he took off warts. Mrs. Mary Spencer remembers bringing carloads of neighborhood children from Fuquay-Varina to have their warts taken off. When they arrived, Dr. West would come out of the house and look at all the warts, saying, "Many I see and few I tell." A few days later the warts would completely disappear. Other people said he would count the warts and then rub them while rolling his eyes around. Then he would thump the warts away and tell the person to forget them.²⁴ Again the warts would disappear within a couple of days. He may have actually said a Bible verse under his breath, for many relatives believe he used the Bible to cure both toothaches and warts. Of course, warts will go away by themselves, but it seems unlikely that all the warts Dr. West encountered were on the verge of disappearing by themselves. Possibly, the person psychosomatically chased away the warts by believing they would go away after Cicero looked at them. Yet that

answer is not satisfying because many people forgot about the warts; they just happened to notice that the warts were gone.

All of these mind cures seem to have some relationship to the Bible, but Cicero only discussed a Bible verse in connection with the stopping of blood. According to his family, he recited Ezekiel 16:6: "And when I passed thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live."^{2 5} Dr. West would repeat the verse three times while holding his breath, and the bleeding would stop. Mr. Fred West remembers one of his hired hands splitting open his arm. Blood gushed out every time his heart beat. Everyone thought he was going to bleed to death before they could get him up to the house. Dr. West came down and said the verse three times while holding his breath. The bleeding stopped, and they took the man to the doctor to be sewn up.^{2 6} According to folk belief, anyone can stop blood with this verse if he has faith. If one did not believe the verse will stop bleeding, then the bleeding will continue. Dr. West had faith in his powers. He did not have to constantly remind people of his powers because his cured patients were living examples.

As his business grew larger, Dr. West's simple mind cures were recognized less and popular attention turned to his herbal medicines and remedies. He became known as the "cancer doctor,"^{2 7} and hundreds of desperate people came to him to be cured. Dr. West did not ignore anyone.^{2 8} If a person came to him, he would diagnose the problem and prescribe the medicine and diet; the patient would then go home until the medicine ran out. Unlike many doctors, Dr. West did not frighten or confuse his patients; his reassurances made them feel better about themselves.^{2 9} He always had a name for the problem that people could understand.^{3 0} They were not confused or frightened by his observations. He gave them something they did not find in conventional medical practice. His confidence permeated the whole healing process, apparently giving his cures a special validity.

When a patient arrived at Dr. West's, he would wait for the doctor to tell him what was wrong.^{3 1} Cicero did not need the

patient's description of his symptoms; he had a glass water tumbler which he passed over people's bodies in order to see their insides, or at least that is what he said he was doing.³² Other people would look through the glass and see nothing, while Dr. West would describe how the heart was beating.³³ This glass tumbler was nothing special; the bottom was cut with little notches.³⁴ As he passed it over the body, it would stop at the place where the trouble was. He would look through the bottom of the glass and reportedly see a cancer or enlarged blood vessel. Possibly Dr. West used the glass to give his patients more faith in his cures. Yet he reportedly never asked a person why he was visiting the office; Dr. West always told the person what was wrong. According to stories many of his patients had been to professional physicians who had also diagnosed the same cancers or diseases Dr. West identified with his tumbler.

After he determined the problem, Dr. West would prescribe one of his medicines or remedies. He had two basic kinds of medicines—one for external problems and several for internal diseases.

The external medicine he used was not made up by his family. Mrs. Mabel Bobbitt from across the road mixed up an Indian remedy she had found in a magazine. The remedy was called "snake grease" because it originally served to cure snake bites. She had had the cure for a long time before she actually used it. One day her dog was bitten on his face by a snake. His mouth was so swollen he could not open it to eat. Mrs. Bobbitt remembered the snake grease remedy and made some up. It was a mixture of butter, eggs, and sugar which was cooked until a sediment appeared. Then the mixture was strained through a cloth and allowed to cool.³⁵ The dog would not allow anyone to touch him, so she used a stick to rub some of the grease on the bite. A few minutes later he stood up and drank some water. The swelling was gone by the next day.³⁶

Dr. West used Mabel Bobbitt's snake grease for many things because it seemed to have soothing powers. People would put it on sores, hemorrhoids, skin cancers, and animal bites. One woman who had breast cancer reportedly used the snake grease to ease the raging pain of her cancer.³⁷ Such simple elements as

butter, eggs, and sugar seem mundane to be used in medicine, but according to reports together they worked to form a soothing cure.

The patient with an internal disorder had a different ritual to follow. If the disease was cancer or something else very serious, he would buy Dr. West's patented herbal medicine and follow a strict diet. For less serious problems, there were simpler remedies. If a baby had thrash, Dr. West would tell the mother to go home and cook an egg without grease. After the egg was cooked, the oil that came out of the egg was poured off and swabbed around the inside of the baby's mouth. Fresh cream or unsalted butter would work just as well if an egg was unavailable.³⁸

Black gum bark from the north side of a tree could be cooked and a tonic strained off for kidney problems. This cure acted like a diuretic as it tended to make people urinate often. Another purifier was Blackroot, which was prescribed to help clean out the blood. Many of these cures reportedly cleaned poisonous wastes out of the body, allowing the system to then take care of itself.

The more serious diseases required a mixture of many different herbs to complete the cure. The exact recipe for Dr. West's herb medicine is not known, but it did contain the following herbs and barks: sweet gum bark, red oak bark, birch bark, wild cherry bark, black gum bark, fever weed, boneset, bloodroot, blackroot, and dark weed.⁴⁰ All these herbs plus others were cooked together for over sixteen hours until they formed an infusion that was poured off and bottled. Even though each of these herbs had specific powers, some sort of chemical reaction must have gone on during cooking to alter them, creating Dr. West's cure for cancer and other illnesses. Each root or bark according to local belief was not strong enough to work by itself; they had to work together. Several men gathered herbs from the local area and other places in North and South Carolina in order to get everything needed for the medicine.⁴¹

For the medicine to work properly, the patient had to follow the printed diet list that came with the medicine. Dr. West was very emphatic about his patients following his instructions

to the letter; he sometimes would tell them they would die if they did not do everything he said to do. An exact description of his diet is not available, but people can remember some of the instructions. Patients were to eat fruits, sweets, soft drinks, cucumbers, tomatoes, and pork.⁴² They were supposed to eat lots of fish and chicken.⁴³ Also on the diet list was a recipe for a blood purifier that the patient made for himself by mixing cream of tartar, grated black magnesium, and sulfur. The patient was to take this mixture with the other medicine once a day for three days, then skip a day and repeat the process over again.⁴⁴ If a patient followed the diet and took his medicine properly, he would eventually be cured, though some diseases would take longer to cure than others.

Dr. West's cures seem to have been straightforward, with very little ritual involved. The only time he seemed to use magic is when he diagnosed the disease with the water tumbler. When a patient who had cancer followed the cure, his body reportedly would expel the cancer. Sometimes the growth would be vomited or passed through the body naturally. Other growths fell out or even burst from the body.⁴⁵ Cicero kept many of these growths in his laboratory in jars with labels explaining what the disease involved.⁴⁶ The combination of medicine and diet apparently was intended to have a purifying effect on people's bodies, gradually washing all unwanted poisons or cancers out of the system. The diet is interesting because it is basically low-fat, allowing the patient to eat things high in protein.

To explain scientifically Dr. West's allegedly always successful cures is difficult, but his powers are the subject of a number of local anecdotes. According to one story, a woman lived in his house for six months with breast cancer. She followed his cure until the cancer fell out of her breast, leaving an indentation where it had been.⁴⁷

Buck Sail remembers pumping gas for a man who could not talk but who was eventually cured:

I know one occasion that a man pulled up there that had a black chauffeur. I don't recall the car but it was one of the biggest for those days. Had a Georgia license on it. He asked me—the chauffeur did—directions down there and I told him. And it must have been two or

three hours later he came back. And he got gas from me. This little fellow sitting in the back all straight, you know, and he smiled but he never did speak. Well, I put the gas in his car and he paid for it and left.

And some days—it wasn't long—maybe a week—he was back again and he stopped and got gas, and the little fellow in the back seat laughed. And this chauffeur every time gave me a quarter tip. Well, back in those days I was working a dollar a day and that quarter tip was big money. And some second or third time I asked him where he was from and he told me—the city [Atlanta].

And this man was a judge—a Supreme Court Justice of the State of Georgia. He had a cancer of the throat. And I know that man and that chauffeur came at least a half a dozen times, maybe eight or ten. But after four or five times he could talk, but you could tell something was wrong in his throat. And I remember him telling me one day—the old judge did that—said he appreciated stopping here. He felt like they got good service. Just kind of built me up like.

The same judge talked to the Bobbitt family and told them that the regular doctors could not help him. Dr. West, his last hope, had cured him so he could speak to tell the story.⁴⁸

One of the more miraculous cures happened to a lawyer from Greensboro, Zeb Young. He came to Dr. West's home late one night after everyone had gone to bed. Cicero's nephew came out to tell the man to come back the next day because his uncle was too old to be working late at night. But Dr. West was listening and told his nephew to take the man to the back bedroom. Young stayed there three months taking the cure. He had been everywhere to get help; he even had a letter from Johns Hopkins saying his cancer was terminal and incurable. Dr. West was his last chance and hope. Some nights, the family thought he was going to die, but Cicero knew he was going to live. Finally, according to the story, the lawyer's side burst open, shooting a green smelly mess to the ceiling. Soon after the incident he was completely cured and went home.⁴⁹

Dr. West filled a need for people conventional medicine had judged incurable; they had nowhere else to go so he took them and somehow cured them. No one will ever know for sure how much of his cure was his medicines or his psychological influence, but many local witnesses attest to the good Dr. West accomplished.

Dr. West's herbal cures almost seem reasonable and scientific when compared to his uncanny knack of perceiving the unknown. According to accounts he seemed constantly aware of everything going on around him. No one reportedly was ever able to deceive him. He could find lost things, predict the future, and perceive what others were doing in another place. In a way, this mysterious perception is similar to his "mind" cures; both seem to have depended on his special ability to concentrate.

If people did try to deceive Dr. West, he would let them know that he saw through their lies. One time two little boys told him they had lost their dog. He took one look at them and told them to get on home and let the dog out of the potato bin. They were testing Dr. West, but he made them look foolish.⁵⁰

But Dr. West was not always so gentle with deceivers as revealed in a story Buck Sail tells about a friend:

I will tell you something about the local people. This boy was a few years older than me, about twenty-five years old. I've known this man all my life. One Sunday he and two or three boys had a few drinks. They were feeling good and decided to play a prank on Dr. West. So they went in, and this particular boy went in, and said, "Doctor, I've got a stomach pain. I just got the worse pain in the world." He was a pretty good showman, and Dr. West said, "Pull your shirt off." And he had his glass—I've seen his glass before. He would press it against your body and say, "That's an enlarged blood vessel, or that's a tumor or that's a cancer here," and he'd have a name for it and you could understand what he had to say. But this particular man he put that glass up and kept going over him, and they tell me that he got his shoulders and went on his back. And all of a sudden he set that glass down hard and said, "Boy, put that shirt on and get out of here; you're trying to trick me." And he said, "Oh no, I'm not." Said, "Boy, get out of here before I stop your blood." And that shirt went on and that boy went out of here. And we boys found out about it and were kidding him about it the next day. He got frightening mad; said, "Just don't talk about it." He was scared to death. I know he was scared. And I wouldn't mention it today to that person about that trick he was trying to play on him.

Something other than Dr. West's threat must have frightened the man. Cicero could stop bleeding, but could he also stop blood while it was still moving inside the body? Perhaps he could make a man's blood run cold with fear according to the local

imagination. Obviously Buck Sail's friend felt some sort of awesome power to make him run away from a seemingly harmless old man.

This same power of perception allowed Dr. West to find lost things. He was often asked to find lost cows. He would concentrate on the problem until he could tell the owner to go to a particular place. The cow was usually where he said it was. Some people say he was lucky about such things, because he did not always know exactly where something was. Yet he was right more times than he was wrong, making his luck seem more like a special ability. For instance, he could say where the cow was at the time he was thinking, but the cow might move before the owner found him. This ability was not just limited to cows. Dr. West also found lost people. A man from the area used to come every afternoon to see if Cicero could find his daughter. She had run off with a man and left the state. He was worried about his daughter since he had not heard from her. For a while Cicero did not know anything, but one day he told the man that his daughter was dead. A few days later the man heard from his daughter's husband that she had died after falling down a flight of stairs.⁵¹ A special psychic power seems the only explanation for such knowledge. Dr. West probably could not have learned the news of the girl's death from anyone; such a person would likely have also told the girl's father. Unless Cicero had spies who sneaked around collecting information as he had herb collectors, he could not have known about her death without psychic help.

Some of his knowledge can be explained by his ability to observe closely. He must have understood human nature extremely well, using his powers of observation to pick up signals that might clue him into what was happening. The two little boys play-acting may have shown small signs of lying that he picked up, but such a conjecture does not explain how he knew where the dog was hidden. Everything seems to return to a special psychic ability that allowed him to perceive things.

Dr. West's predictions to his second wife attest to such a psychic ability. He told her that after he died, she would remarry and have two children. The second child would die

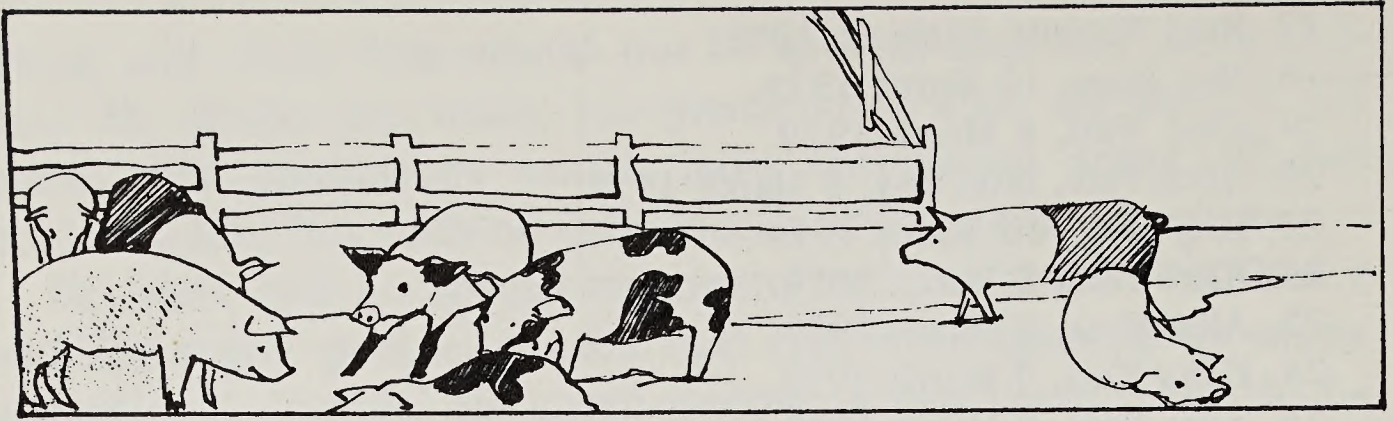
young, and Alice Pate would not be able to bear any more children. He spoke the truth; his predictions were fulfilled.⁵² Of course, his predictions could have influenced some of her choices in life, but such an influence is still psychic in nature.

Dr. West and his special treatment and predictions fulfilled a need for many people, a need that had been ignored by many conventional doctors. He cured people, a fact there seems to be no doubt about in the minds of local observers, but no doctor ever tried to discover the scientific basis of his influences. A few doctors fought his success because it reflected their failure. The people who believed in Dr. West did not question his power or its causes; such knowledge was not necessary to their faith in him. The local folk now tell his life story, leaving the academic to wonder about unanswered questions. Unexplained mysteries about Dr. West can only be answered through the study of living folk-practitioners and their medicines. When knowledge about these present-day folk doctors is gained, it might be focused back on the life of Dr. West and show more clearly the role of folk medicine in modern society.

NOTES

1. *Raleigh News and Observer*, 9 November 1942, p. 4.
2. The author is related to the Bobbitts through her mother. This relationship causes her to believe her relatives and the informants they recommended to be reliable sources.
3. The names of informants have been changed to protect their privacy. All interviews were done in Harnett and Wake Counties, N.C.
4. Fred West, interview, 8 March 1979.
5. Ed Bobbitt, interview, 6 March 1979.
6. Fred West, 8 March 1979.
7. Meg Shoe, interview, 10 March 1979.
8. Ed Bobbitt, 10 March 1979.
9. Ed Bobbitt, 10 March 1979.
10. Edna Yett, interview, 7 March 1979.
11. Brad Bobbitt, interview, 9 March 1979.
12. Fred West, 8 March 1979.
13. Fred West, 8 March 1979.
14. Fred West, 8 March 1979.
15. Fred West, 8 March 1979.
16. Buck Sail, interview, 17 March 1979.

17. Brad Bobbitt, 9 March 1979.
18. Meg Shoe, 10 March 1979.
19. Fred West, 8 March 1979.
20. Alice Pate, interview, 8 March 1979.
21. Meg Shoe, 10 March 1979.
22. Alice Pate, 8 March 1979.
23. Alice Pate, 8 March 1979.
24. Edna Yett, 7 March 1979.
25. Alice Pate, 8 March 1979.
26. Fred West, 8 March 1979.
27. Buck Sail, 17 March 1979.
28. Alice Pate, 8 March 1979.
29. Fred West, 8 March 1979.
30. Buck Sail, 17 March 1979.
31. Alice Pate, 8 March 1979.
32. Buck Sail, 17 March 1979.
33. Edna Yett, 7 March 1979.
34. Alice Pate, 8 March 1979.
35. The exact recipe for snake grease is one pound of unsalted butter, three egg yolks, and an amount of sugar equal to the eggs. Cook the mixture as described in the text.
36. Edna Yett, 7 March 1979.
37. Meg Shoe, 10 March 1979.
38. Beth Trexler, interview, 7 March 1979.
39. Alice Pate, 8 March 1979.
40. Ed Bobbitt, 10 March 1979.
41. Buck Sail, 17 March 1979.
42. Alice Pate, 8 March 1979.
43. Brad Bobbitt, 9 March 1979.
44. Fred West, 8 March 1979.
45. Fred West, 8 March 1979.
46. Buck Sail, 17 March 1979.
47. Brad Bobbitt, 9 March 1979.
48. Meg Shoe, 10 March 1979.
49. Fred West, 8 March 1979.
50. Alice Pate, 8 March 1979.
51. Edna Yett, 7 March 1979.
52. Alice Pate, 8 March 1979.



Student Contest Honorable Mention

A Hog Killing in Eastern North Carolina

by Sylvie Houbart

Being a native of Brussels, a center of cosmopolitan European cuisine, I was wide-eyed the first time I was presented with an American meal consisting of a bowl of chitterlings, a plate of lard, corn pone, and fried okra, and a glass of iced tea. But rather than dismiss the foodways of the Southern countryside as some travelers have done,¹ I sought to understand them better and subsequently developed a strong interest in the South and the popularity of pork in Southern foodways.

Although home hog slaughter is quietly fading into the past in many areas, the wide use of pork in the diet of Southerners is not. From the colonial period on, pork has been an important part of Southern agricultural economy and life,² and it still is. I found this conclusion true one freezing January morning in 1979 when I visited the Hinnant farm in Buckhorn, N.C., twelve miles west of Wilson. There I found evidence that hog killing and pork cookery help to distinguish this region and, indeed, this family of farmers.

Sylvie Houbart, a graduate student at East Carolina University, studied the Hinnants' traditional hog killing during a course with Karen Baldwin.

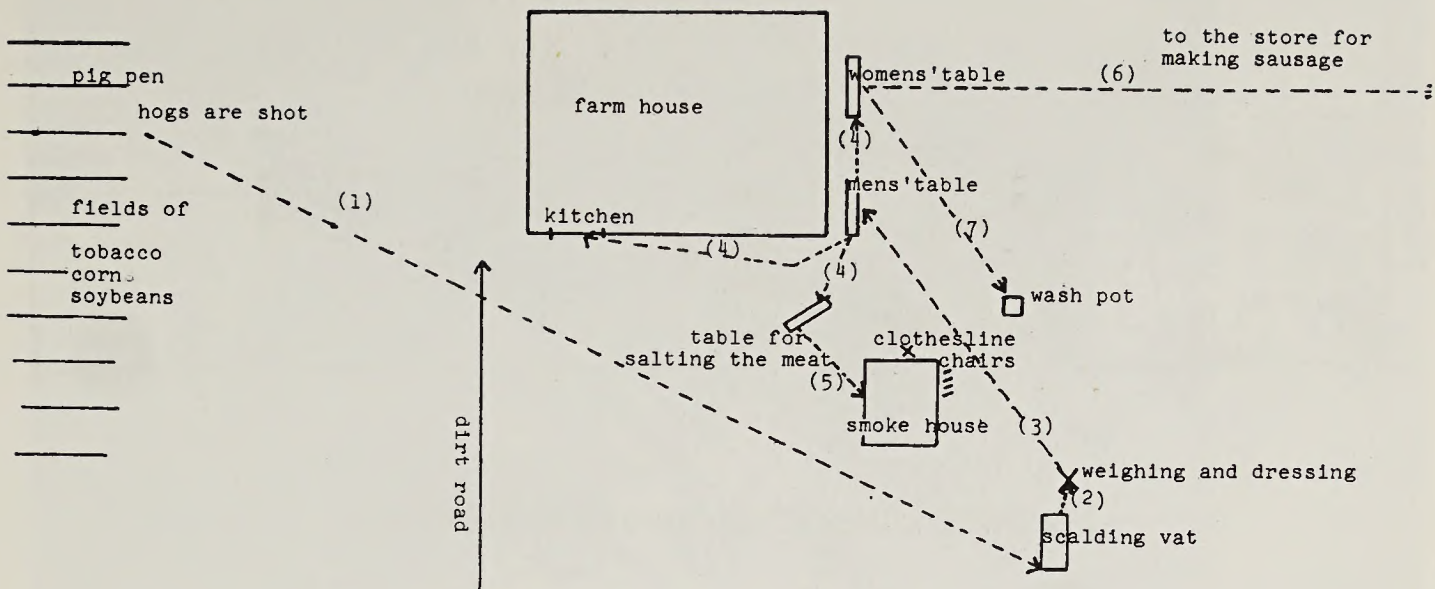


Fig. 1. Rough Sketch of the Hinnant Farm. Numbers indicate steps in the hog killing process.

The Hinnant farm house stands at the end of a rough dirt road. In January the sun shines brightly on surrounding frozen fields planted in soybeans, tobacco, and corn in warmer weather. Behind the house several baskets of pecans stand at the foot of a sturdy pecan tree. A large pig pen is to the left of the house. (See Fig. 1.)

Before hog killing day many farmers check the weather report. Three to five days of cold weather are required after the hogs are killed. If it is too warm, the meat will spoil. But if it is too cold, the meat will not absorb the salt used in the curing process. Shelton Hinnant, 35, husband, farmer, and the youngest son of the family, however, rarely checks the thermometer. He knows by his feelings when the weather is cold enough (15 to 20 degrees F).

The Hinnants shoot the hog between the eyes with a 22-mm. rifle. To insure hitting the hog's small brain and minimize the trauma of the shot, they shoot from as close a distance as possible. Six hogs are to be killed this day. Once shot, the hog's throat is opened and a sharp butcher knife is pushed all the way down it to penetrate the heart and allow the escape of the blood. This knife is sometimes called a "sticker," and this process is referred to as the "sticking process."³

The Hinnants then load the hog on a pickup truck and carry it to the "scalding vat" (Fig. 2), which contains water

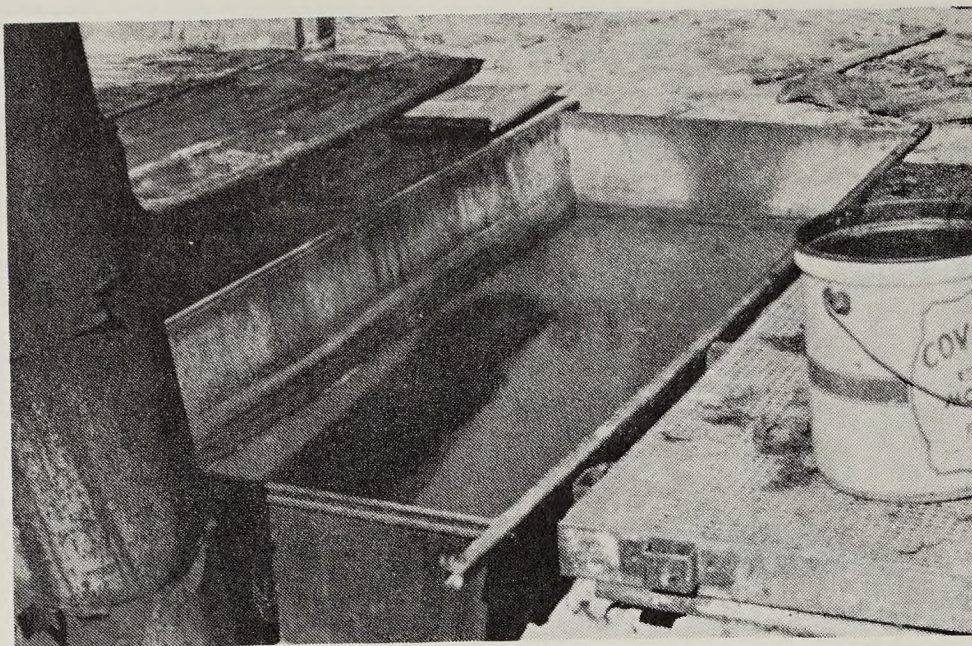
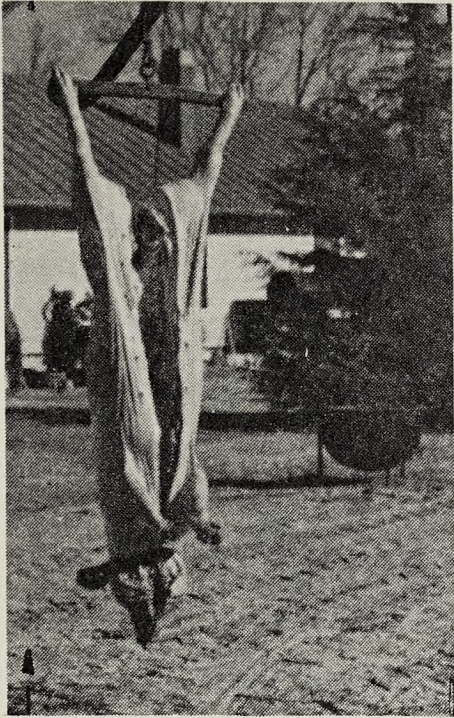


Fig. 2. Scalding Vat. Water is heated to about 150 degrees F.

heated to about 150 degree F and small pine branches. Wood ashes or hydrated lime is also sometimes used in this process. The men dip the hog in the vat for three or four minutes helping to loosen the hog's bristles. They keep turning the body so it will not get so hot that the hair won't come off easily. Ropes are looped around the hog, allowing two men to move it. The hog's skin is then cleaned with a "scraper" or "bell-scraper," a sharp-edged piece of metal, bent to the shape of the hog's back and attached to a wooden handle.

In the Hinnants' practice, after scalding the hog, four strong men remove it from the vat. They transport it in the front end loader of a pickup truck and hang it from a single tree by nails through its Achilles tendons (Fig. 3).

Shelton Hinnant then starts "gutting" or "dressing the hog." This is a precise, almost artistic operation. He removes the internal organs: liver, heart, kidneys, intestines, pancreas, and lungs. Shelton is a tall, stocky man, a hard worker. Though he has two older brothers, he directs the operation. Howard Lee, one of his brothers, a farmer and a carpenter during the winter, and Jennings Hinnant, a cousin, help him by holding the hog. The Hinnants throw away the intestines, which many folks save to make "chittlings." The liver, lungs, heart, and kidneys (or "hasslett") are hung on a wooden clothesline support (Fig. 4), a rather curious sight. The cavity of the hog is well rinsed with clear, cool water, and the hog is left hanging to drain.



Figs. 3 and 4. Details of Gutted Hog. After gutting, the hog is attached to a single tree by its Achilles tendons. Internal organs are hung on a clothes-line.



Fig. 5. Weighing the Hog. The Hinnants use a set of balance scales that are reportedly a hundred years old.

The weighing comes next (Fig. 5). The iron scales or balances are over a hundred years old, and according to the owners, extremely accurate. One six-month-old swine killed today weighs 141 pounds.

The hog, still hanging from the single tree, is then carried away by the truck and placed on one of the wooden tables. The "cut up" now begins. Bill Hinnant, Shelton's oldest brother and also a farmer, and Norman Lamm, a neighbor of Bill's, will help Erastus Renfrow, another neighbor and retired farmer, who is in

charge of the cutting. The first two men hold the hog and carry the cut pieces to a table near the smoke house. Erastus, the head butcher, owns the cutting tools: a sharp knife, hatchet, and saw. Methodically he cuts two hams, two shoulders, two backs, two pieces of tenderloin, and then removes the ribs. He then cuts the head and slices off the nose and ears. He splits the head in half and carefully extracts the brain. The brain is washed and can be cooked immediately or stored in the refrigerator to be eaten for breakfast with scrambled eggs.

Erastus will cut up six hogs today. I'm impressed by the precision of his blows, his strength, and his knotted muscular hands. He is sixty-seven. When a neighbor has a hog killing, Erastus comes with his tools. He always has done the cutting. His participation attests to the communal nature of hog killings in the local area.

The other two men throw pieces of fat and meat on the women's table where eight women are busy separating the fat from the lean meat and skin (Fig. 6). Erastus' wife, Eloise, sits in a gray hooded sweatshirt, a white apron wrapped around her small body. The apron has two huge pockets with the initials "E.R." on the bib. Shelton's wife Faye is there along with Betsy and Charlotte, the daughters of Erastus and Eloise, and Barbara, the wife of a nearby gas station owner. The women separate as much of the fat as they can from the skin since the skin will not be kept. It is a tedious job. In the past, when they did keep the skin for food, they would leave more fat on it for frying. They also used to use the skin for making soap.

The women cut the fat into small cubes and throw them into old, heavy wooden tubs. The lean meat, with just a little fat attached, is cut up into rough strips and thrown into other tubs; it will be ground for sausage later on. The women, wrapped against the cold in heavy coats, pull-overs, and caps, do their work rapidly and efficiently. While cutting, they exchange stories of family events and recipes for cooking the different parts of the hog. There are some laughs, but these don't interrupt the women's work or concentration.

While the cutting continues on the two tables, Norman and Jennings Hinnant salt the hams, shoulders, sides, heads, tails, and



Fig. 6. The Women's Table. Separating the lean meat is a communal task uniting two generations of Hinnant and neighbor women.

feet on a wooden table near the smoke house. Salt curing has replaced smoke curing on this farm, but the meat is still stored in the smoke house. "Not everybody knows how to salt meat," says Charlotte; one has to rub the non-iodized salt forcefully into the meat, being careful not to forget curves and hard to reach spots. The Hinnants buy the salt in fifty pound bags.

I step cautiously inside the smoke house. The various cuts of meat are laid out on wooden tables, covered with washed fertilizer bags ("Guyana bags") white with salt. A dozen hams are lined up on the tables. The feet and heads are laid on the dirt floor also covered with bags. The smoke house is not air-tight. At the end of the day, the Hinnants lock its single door.

The meat remains in the smoke house for six weeks. Then the salt is knocked off and the meat is washed thoroughly. A mixture of Borax to keep bugs away and black pepper is rubbed on it. Finally the meat is hung in the smoke house until it dries. It may stay there for the rest of the year during what is called the curing process.⁵

One can eat the meat fresh as well. In that case, the pieces of meat are put directly in the freezer. Howard Lee, who doesn't like the taste of salted hams, argues the salt ruins the flavor of the meat; he likes his meat served fresh as ham steaks.

I step into the warm farm kitchen where a fire is burning. Two old women are busy cooking the dinner, the noon meal. Minnie Hinnant, seventy, is standing at the stove, frying a dozen

cubes of lean meat and tenderloins which have been cut up fresh that morning. A bit shy when we first met, she is a gentle, friendly, soft-spoken lady. She patiently explains to me that if you cut the backbone to make pork chops, you don't have lean meat. Today they don't make pork chops, but cut the strips on both sides of the backbone to have lean meat. She rolls the pieces in the flour and puts them in a large frying pan. She will divide the total amount into two parts: one to be eaten "dry," just fried; the other to be cooked later in the same pan in a rich, thick gravy. She describes the latter as "Southern style," still wondering at my tape recorder and camera.

Minnie's daughter, Betsy, a plump vivacious woman, is busy making "chicken pastry." Though Minnie by tradition always took care of this dish, she is now getting too old and her health is not too good. Betsy learned to make it from her mother:

You take two cups of flour and a piece of lard about the size of an egg. About three tablespoons of vinegar—that toughens it—and hot water. Maybe a bit of the chicken broth; enough to make it into a dough. You put it into a pan and roll it and knead it. You break it off into pieces about the size of a hamburger bun and roll it until it is thin. Cut it in little strips; put them down on a plate; let it chill (you don't have to). Then put the strips in the chicken broth and let them boil. If the raw dough is boiled too long, it will be too tough. The chicken is used for chicken salad.⁶

Esthel Hinnant, Minnie's sister-in-law, is cooking most of the other dishes. She will make corn bread or "corn pone" the old-fashioned way. She pours only water and salt into the corn meal and fills two iron pans, generously greased with lard, with the mixture. Though she knows other people add milk, sugar, and eggs, she never uses these extra ingredients. I watch her carefully. She doesn't measure anything, and when I ask for the ingredients' measurements she laughs and tells me: "My mama made it, and her [Minnie's] mama made it. I don't know. It's just one of those things that goes on, I reckon." She makes some biscuits with buttermilk, self-rising flour, and lard. A dozen sweet potatoes have already been cooked and put on the big kitchen table. The dinner—a hog killing feast—will soon be ready. Outside the other women are still busy cutting the lard.

At noon Minnie and Esthel call the men to eat. They all come in and sit at the table. There are no women present except for the two older ladies who serve. I feel a little uneasy, out of place. I stay a few more moments, just to note the dishes on the table. There are butter beans, beets, corn, steamed chopped cabbage seasoned with a piece of cured ham, steamed potatoes in large bowls. These vegetables from the Hinnants' garden were canned or frozen during the summer. There are also chicken pastry, fresh pieces of pork tenderloin and lean meat cut just a little while ago, sweet potatoes baked in their peelings, chicken salad, corn pone, biscuits, cured pork from last year, and coconut cake—Esthel's specialty—and banana pudding for dessert. Iced tea and hot coffee are served. Shelton Hinnant, the head of the household, says grace. I look once more at the table loaded with food and surrounded by the farmers. They are passing the dishes around under the careful inspection of Minnie. But she doesn't need to worry: there is plenty of food for everybody.

I go outside, leaving behind me the sounds of laughter, and I join the other women. Charlotte Tucker, Eloise's daughter, explains:

The men have started earlier this morning and they have the hogs killed. They have to scrape them and and cut them before the women can start in working with the meat. At noon, the men have finished up their job for right then, and while they wait for the women to finish cutting the lard, they go to eat. By the time they finish eating, the women have finished with the lard and sausage. The women go to eat, and one part of the men take the sausage meat to be fixed and the other part of the men get the lard ready. It has always been done that way. It is more practical that way.

Half an hour later, the men are out in the cold again. I go in to eat with the women when the men are through. There are eight of us at the table. Minnie and Esthel continue serving; they will eat last.

After the dinner, Minnie, the woman of the house, will go outside to give her instructions to the men. She knows how she wants her meat wrapped or hung in the smoke house, and she directs that part of the operation. The women take half an hour

to eat. The younger ones go back outside to start cleaning the feet and ears of the hogs. They also clean off the two wooden tables.

I go with Shelton and Norman to a local store to grind the "sausage-meat." Two heavy wooden tubs full of meat are covered with white cloths to keep the dirt away and loaded in the car. It doesn't take more than ten minutes to drive to Boykin and Granger's, a general merchandise store in Rock Ridge. In the store, where one can find just about anything from groceries and feeds to hardware, there is a small room where the meat is ground. In this room are a heavy scale, a butcher-block table, a machine for grinding the meat and one for stuffing the sausage, and a huge wooden table lined with aluminum, resembling a large sink. The meat is poured on the table and seasoned with sage and black and red pepper. The Hinnants like their sausage mild, so the seasoning isn't too strong. I watch Shelton mixing the meat vigorously, his hands half buried in the meat: "The better you mix it, the better the sausage will be." Then the mixture is poured into an electric grinder. Occasionally Arthur, wearing a large white apron, tamps the meat into the machine with a wooden tool. The ground meat falls into a wooden tub in which Norman continues to mix it so that the fat and lean are evenly distributed.

Arthur now starts to stuff sheep intestines provided by the store with the meat. He first washes the sheep intestines in warm water so they'll be limber and won't break during packing. The Hinnants used to save the small intestines of the hogs for sausage casings. These had to be scraped thoroughly, then inverted and scrubbed with salt, reinverted and scrubbed some more. They had to blow each one up to check for holes. It is easier to use the store-bought sheep intestines. Arthur stuffs the machine with meat and attaches one end of a sheep intestine to a tube hooked on the machine. The meat rapidly fills the intestine. Arthur helps the machine along in the stuffing operation and catches the sausage which falls into the sink.

It takes Arthur a good hour to finish his work. He doesn't talk much, except to point out that "this is a good sausage" and that "you sure can't find such a good sausage in big stores."

Shelton could go somewhere else where the sausage making process would be faster, but he prefers to come here because each step is conscientiously followed. In earlier days folks used a handgrinding sausage mill, which they usually shared with their neighbors.

The two men fill the tubs with the finished sausage and again cover them with white cloths. Back on the farm they hang the sausage in the smoke house on bamboo sticks and allow it to dry for about a week. Any kind of sticks could be used, but they must be wooden so that they don't tear the sausage.⁷

While the men are grinding the sausage, the women scrape the ears, feet, and noses of the hogs. These parts of the hog have always been considered high delicacies. Charlotte explains what they do with these parts:

You take the ears, nose, and head. It will be soaked in salt water for three days and scraped then real good and cooked until it is very, very tender. The ear is nothing but skin and gristle, and the nose is about the same. You chop it all together. You drain it and season it with salt, pepper, and vinegar or mustard sause. This is called "souse" or "headcheese." The feet are cleaned as well and cooked very tender, and they are packed in jars, and vinegar is poured over them and they are pickled. After three or four weeks they are very good to eat. You can also salt the feet down first, let them stay for a couple of weeks, then take the salt off before you clean them and cook them. Some people fry them too, but it doesn't have a fresh flavor.

Making headcheese avoids wasting any portion of the "hog-meat," but it also is regarded as a special delicacy. Some people add diced onions and pickles for flavoring.⁸

The livers are saved for the "hash," a kind of beef stew. One or two whole livers and a heart are chopped together. Spareribs are put in the mixture to give it a meaty taste. The hash is cooked and seasoned with sage, salt, and pepper. The hash is only made and eaten after a hog killing.⁹ Other livers are fried and cooked in gravy with onions and simmered until tender. Rice is served with it. Some people fry the heart. At the Hin-nants,' the hash is always eaten with sweet potatoes and corn bread.

While the women finish cleaning up, the men fix the lard. The small cubes or chunks of fat are placed in a large iron pot, the "wash pot." Before washing machines this pot was used to



Fig. 7. A Break. Men and women discuss the day's activities while some of the men tend the lard tub.

boil clothes. About a gallon of water is poured into the bottom to avoid burning the lard. A fire of green oak is started. One man has the task of looking after the lard, constantly stirring it with the lard paddle. This process may take up to four hours. The men sit close to the wash pot, leaning their backs on the wall of the smoke house. It is getting close to five, but the sun is still shining. Now everybody takes a break and comments on the day's doings (Fig. 7). Most of the fat is rendered into lard. Slowly the lard melts and the "cracklings," crisp skin and fat, rise to the top. When the lard is done, the previously noisy vat becomes silent. The cracklings are dipped out with a pot and poured in the "crackling sack," a piece of white cloth.

The men call Eloise, who always takes care of the cracklings. Two people must hold the "crackling press" made of oak (Fig. 8). They put the sack between the oak panels and squeeze it to allow the grease to come out along the troughs chiseled into the wood. They then grind the cracklings up very fine to make crackling bread or biscuits.¹⁰ The Hinnants also sprinkle cracklings on sweet potatoes.

The making of the cracklings is another illustration of the commitment to using every scrap of meat that comes from the hog butchering. It reflects a resourcefulness in preparing for hard times necessary in earlier days, but still recognized today. Women had to display ingenuity and imagination in the develop-



Fig. 8. Crackling Press. Grease from cracklings pressed by the oak panel will be channeled along its troughs.

ment of palatable recipes utilizing all parts of the hog. These traditional recipes based earlier on necessity are now regarded by many as delicacies.

The lard, once a milky color, is totally transparent now. It is poured in large milk cans called "stands," which serve as lard tins. They are stored in the smoke house. Once cooled, the lard looks like Crisco vegetable shortening and is used for various cooking purposes.

At the end of the day, there is another big meal for the family and their neighbors who worked during the day. The menu for the noon meal is repeated, and people talk of how hog killings were in the "old days."

In days past, local folk used to save the "chitterlings" or hogs' intestines as food. Their preparation was considerable, and the women no longer wish to go through that process. The large intestine was separated from the small intestine, and the fat removed from both. Two women would take care of the large intestine, while two would prepare the smaller one. The hardest part was getting rid of the intestines' contents. One woman stripped them, while another kept pouring water through one end. The large intestine was cut into pieces which were washed separately. The small intestine stayed in one piece. Cleaning took three days: the intestines were scrubbed in salt and rinsed in water repeatedly. They were plaited together and cooked in

water, and then put in a white cloth and tied up to be kept in a cool place. The women had to cook them until tender, then chop them and fry them in a pan.

By now it is getting dark and cold. Some of the neighbors are ready to leave. The Hinnants wipe off the tables, clean the tools, and carefully lock the smoke house.

Communal labor parties, such as corn shuckings and fish muddles, once so important to frontier survival are slowly disappearing in rural America. Neighbors don't pitch in as much these days. For the Hinnants and their neighbors in Buckhorn though, hog killing day means more than a day of shared hard work. It is a social event, an occasion to visit family and neighbors, a day of friendship. The dinner meets the needs of work, religion, gregariousness, and politics. Hog killing day is for them not only a sharing of work, but also a feast, a feast of labor and of eating. The dinner features a large variety and quantity of food. Feasting for the Hinnants, who are Methodists, doesn't mean heavy drinking and endless hours spent at the table. There is not enough time; work needs to be done. The dinner feast has many dishes, lined up one after another on the simply decorated rural table. It is not extravagant, but there is lots to eat, especially a lot of home-butchered pork on which they focus much pride, effort, and care to raise, slaughter, and prepare.

NOTES

1. For other travelers' reactions to Southern pork ways, see Emily Burke, *Reminiscences of Georgia* (Oberlin, Ohio: James F. Fitch, 1850), p. 223; Harriet Martineau, *Society in America*, 2nd ed. (London: Saunders and Otley, 1837), II, 203; and John S. Wilson, "Health Department," *Godey's Lady's Book*, 6 February 1860, p. 178.

2. Historical surveys of Southern agriculture and foodways are provided in Sam Bowers Hilliard, *Hog Meat and Hoecake, Food in the Old South 1840-1860* (Carbondale, Ill.: U. of Southern Illinois P., 1972), p. 37; H. Kephart, *Our Southern Highlanders* (New York: Outing Publishing, 1913); R.O. Cummings, *The American Food: A History of Food Habit in the United States* (Chicago: U. of Chicago P., 1940); and T. Nelson, *The Old South* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938).

3. For the lexicon of hog killing, see Kelsie S. Harder, "The Vocabulary of Hog Killing," *Tennessee Folklore Society Bulletin*, 25 (1969), 111-15.

4. For regional methods of hog scalding, see Lynwood Montell, "Hog Killing in the Kentucky Hill Country: The Initial Phases," *Kentucky Folklore Record*, 18 (1972), 63.

5. For other older methods of curing, see *The Southern Farmer and Market Gardener* (Charleston, S.C.: R. Bobcock, 1852).

6. All interviews with the members of the Hinnant family and their neighbors took place on 31 January 1979 during the hog killing at Buckhorn, N.C.

7. Stephen Wendell describes regional variants of sausage stuffing in his "Hog Killing Time in Middle Tennessee," *Tennessee Folklore Society Bulletin*, 36 (1970), 88-89.

8. Nana Farris, "Head Cheese, A Country Delicacy," *Kentucky Folklore Record*, 10 (1964), 14-15.

9. Wendell, p. 91, provides an East Tennessee "stew" recipe.

10. For a Kentucky mountain crackling bread recipe, see David Watts, "Crackling Bread," *Kentucky Folklore Record*, 19 & 20 (1973-74), 18.

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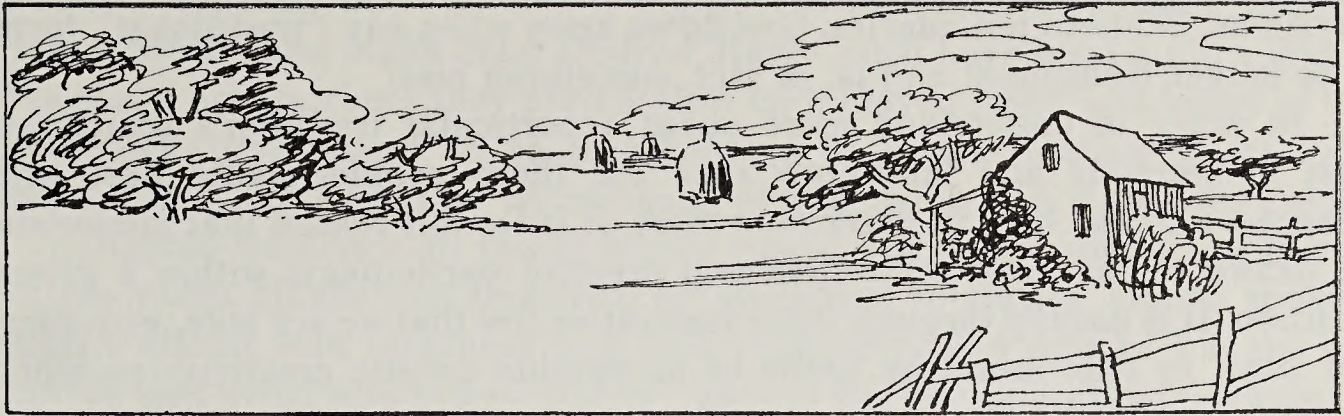
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Front Cover: Manco Sneed, Cherokee, N.C., 1970. (Photo by
Blanton Owen.)



Fig. 1. Manco Sneed, Cherokee, N.C., 1970. (Photo by Blanton Owen.)



Manco Sneed and the Indians: "These Cherokee Don't Make Music Much"

by Blanton Owen

It is tempting to take the easy route when studying a region's folklife by dealing with "items" as if they exist and have existed without much tampering with by human beings. It is easy simply to collect "stuff" (barn plans, tales, ballads, and fiddle tunes) and, once collected, to shuffle and analyze these things at will. This is not to say that such endeavors have no value, for they can and do. But if one is interested in the operating rules which help govern an item's development, persistence, or demise, one must look beyond the item itself. Especially when dealing with expressive and performing arts, it is absolutely necessary, as Henry Glassie has suggested, to "move inward from the item to inspect the individual and his culture,"¹ in order to understand better both the observable characteristics which determine and limit that individual's expression or performance, and some of the reasons—psychological, social, and cultural—which allow and direct this person to do what he does in the way he does it.

One of the results of studying traditions primarily through items and without enough regard for the individuals who made them is that we, as folklorists, delude ourselves into thinking we come to know that tradition. Such an assumption is pretentious. At best, we may learn something of the normative patterns within a tradition—the "norm" or "average"—but we can know nothing about that tradition's limits—if indeed it has limits. I use the term "limits" loosely, for we all know that folklife of all sorts continually shifts and adjusts and refuses to be plugged neatly into any sort of limiting

The three essays on Southern instrumental music in this issue are revisions of papers originally presented as part of a panel at the American Folklore Society meeting in Los Angeles on 26 October 1979.

pigeon hole. Flexible limits do exist though, at specific times and places in all traditions. Without boundaries, how do we know when any "traditional" form is no longer traditional and is, in fact, something else?

In order to understand more about a particular tradition's limits, we must deliberately and knowingly seek out those people—again past and present—who can help us determine them. It is for this reason that folklorists are drawn to the most innovative and creative participants within a given tradition. It is usually through these innovative few that we are able, with care and time, to determine the limits of acceptable artistic creativity possible within a tradition. The problem with concentrating on these individuals, though, is the danger of assigning traditional status to elements which, in fact, have gone beyond the realm of the traditional aesthetic. If this is done, our picture of the tradition as a whole will be skewed if not absolutely wrong.

When we run across one of these few innovative performers, especially within a fiddle tradition, it is essential to learn as much as possible about why and how this person developed into the kind of performer he is. Family histories and sources of influence upon his style and repertory must be determined. With this background information in hand, it is then possible to place the musician within his broader tradition and to determine how he has or has not expanded the limits of creative possibilities within the tradition.

Studying the fiddle style of Manco Sneed presents an example of this research process. He is an innovative, creative performer. Investigating his development presents a sense of some of the limits of traditional Southern fiddle styles.

An investigation of the development of Manco Sneed's style best begins with a look at his family and personal background. Manco Sneed was born on February 18, 1885, in Jackson County, North Carolina, which lies on the eastern slopes of the Smoky Mountains. Prior to Andrew Jackson's Cherokee removal in 1838, Manco's grandfather, an English trader, moved from Charleston, South Carolina, into the North Georgia area of the Cherokee Nation where he married a full-blooded Cherokee. Sometime prior to 1885, Manco's parents, John and Sara Lovin Sneed, moved to Jackson County from Hiawasse, Georgia, which lies just across the state line. John Sneed, who was half Cherokee, had a wide reputation as a showman fiddler. He played left-handed without reversing the strings on his fiddle and did a lot of showy trick fiddling. It is said that when his wife got put out with him, he would strike off down the road playing the tune "Going Down This Road Feeling Bad" with the fiddle behind his back. When Manco was about twelve years old, he moved two counties west with his family to Graham County, North Carolina. It was while he was here that Manco really devoted energy to learning to play the fiddle. His two older brothers, Osco and Peko, also played music, but they never developed their abilities beyond the rudimentary stages. His youngest brother, Camco, was known as a dancer, but he apparently had no inclination to make music himself.

While in Graham County, Manco made the acquaintance of Dedrick Harris, an excellent fiddle player by all accounts who was originally from Flag

Pond, Tennessee, but was then living in Andrews, North Carolina. The very young Manco and much older Dedrick Harris must have been quite a team at the social events where they played; they both played fiddle and banjo so they could take time about on each instrument as the inclination struck them. Manco said, however, that he normally played banjo and Harris the fiddle.

Harris' influence on young Manco Sneed was great; almost one quarter of the tunes Manco has recorded, he attributed to Harris. Manco spoke of Harris almost with reverence and took pride in noting that he was the only person still living who played Harris' tunes in Harris' style. Harris' reputation as one of western North Carolina's best fiddlers is still alive today. In a recent conversation, banjo maker Homer Locust told me that Harris and Manco Sneed were—in Mr. Locust's opinion—the two best fiddlers this country ever produced. Harris, in addition to participating in the famous 1925 fiddler's convention in Mountain City, Tennessee (where he is pictured with his twin brother, Demp, on the cover of County LP #525), also recorded commercially twice. In 1924, he did four sides in New York with Ozzie Helton for Broadway Records, and in 1925, he recorded "Cacklin' Hen" for Okeh in Atlanta.²

Another man whom Manco knew and played music with while in Graham County was Mac Hensley. Though Manco attributes none of his tunes directly to Hensley, he did play a lot of music with him and remembers him as being a good old-time fiddler, though not quite as good as Dedrick Harris. Manco also played music with Mac Hensley's nephew, Fiddlin' Bill Hensley, who, according to Manco, was a pretty good fiddler, but played a little rough and drank too much.³

In about 1903, John Sneed moved his family to the Cherokee Indian Reservation. Although John was one-half Cherokee, his move seems strange, especially in light of the fact that John—according to Manco's son-in-law, Nat Brewer—"hated the ground the Indian walked on." In fact, John carried a large walking stick loaded with lead with which he was known to have knocked more than one Indian senseless. He was also supposed to have used a ten-gauge shotgun to shoot at loud Cherokee who passed near his house on their way through the gap between Soco and the village of Cherokee. At any rate, the Sneeds—with their eighteen-year-old son, Manco, who was right at the height of his learning stage—moved onto the reservation.

With this move, the social outlets for the music Manco had learned while in Graham County almost completely disappeared. There were no parties and dances in Cherokee such as he had enjoyed around Robbinsville and Andrews. The few dances he played for after his move were strictly for "white boys and girls." In his typically understated manner, Manco summed up the situation when he said, "these Cherokee, they don't make music much." So, except for occasional visits to a Dr. Bennett's place in Bryson City⁴ (where he played for partying railroad workers) and occasional visits by his former music friends, especially Harris and Mac Hensley, his frequent get-togethers with other musicians ceased. His lack of contact with other regional white musicians was further hampered by the mountainous topography and poor roads.

With his move to Cherokee, the social base for the dance music Manco played when he was first learning was virtually lost. Faced with this situation, Manco was forced to make an important decision; to drop his no longer socially relevant music or to reevaluate it and continue playing. For several reasons, he chose the latter.

When Manco Sneed moved onto the Cherokee Reservation and the social outlets for his Anglo-style fiddle music disappeared, his music gradually shifted away from the performance of "frolic" pieces toward a higher development of more intricate and melodically complex tunes. Based on what Manco has told me, as well as on what his sons and daughters have said, at one time Manco could play for hours and not play the same tune twice. I have no doubts of this; it seems inconceivable that someone with Manco's technical ability would not have played a fairly large number of tunes, especially during his learning years. By the time he was in his early seventies until he died in 1974, however, this was not the case. The total number of his recorded tunes of which I am aware is ridiculously small, a total of twenty-eight separate tunes, including two so-called "Cherokee pieces." In 1959, Peter Hoover recorded twelve of his pieces.⁵ During the three year period of 1970 to 1973, I recorded only five tunes not previously recorded by Hoover. I recently heard two tape recordings of Manco made in the early and mid-sixties by his son-in-law, Joseph Laurel Johnson (who was himself a good fiddler from Atlanta), on which Manco played a total of thirty-four tunes, but there were only twelve tunes I had not heard before. His total recorded repertory of which I am aware, therefore, stands at twenty-eight separate tunes.

On one of these tapes, recorded in the early 1960's by Manco's son-in-law, Manco on all nineteen tunes played is accompanied by Mr. Johnson, playing two-finger style banjo, and Manco's daughter, Mary Freeman, playing guitar. It is significant, however, that—accompanied or not—Manco still played his basic repertory of tunes, a repertory consisting of tunes which, for the most part, are incredibly difficult to accompany. This tape is interesting, for it readily illustrates the difficulties inherent in attempting to accompany complex melodies. Although, for example, many of Manco's tunes (such as "Georgia Belle" and "Snowbird") have "G" to "F" chord progressions, neither the guitarist nor the banjo player made any attempt to change accordingly. Although discordant accompaniment sometimes is deliberate ("it sounds better that way"), this instance was not deliberate.

Of the twenty-eight different tunes recorded by Manco, only about seven comprise his obvious favorites—his core repertory. On almost every tape made of his music, he repeated these same seven tunes. In fact, on a tape I made in 1970 and on another I made in 1973, even the playing order of the tunes is almost the same. Manco's seven core tunes are:

Katy Hill
Forks of Sandy
Polly Put the Kettle On (father)
Snowbird (J. D. Harris)

Georgia Belle (either J. D. Harris or Mac Hensley)

Grey Eagle (J. D. Harris)

Billy in the Lowground (J. D. Harris)

Manco's total recorded repertory of which I am aware is, in addition to the above seven pieces:

Cumberland Gap

Rocky Palace

Blackberry Blossom (learned in the thirties from Fiddlin' Arthur Smith radio broadcasts)

Newport Breakdown (Blind Wiley Laws)

Waggoner

Lady Hamilton (probably J. D. Harris)

Paddy on the Turnpike

Ragtime Annie

Florida Blues (Fiddlin' Arthur Smith radio broadcasts)

Under the Double Eagle

Sally Johnson

There are ten tunes which I have so far been unable to identify, including the two "Cherokee pieces."

It seems that as time passed, Manco continually refined his music. He let slip all but those very few tunes which must have seemed to him special. He invariably chose to maintain melodically complex pieces, pieces that allowed plenty of room for individual development and creativity. Not surprisingly, the tunes which he apparently once knew but eventually dropped from his repertory are those normally considered "frolic" or strictly dance pieces. With the doors open for him to do virtually anything he felt like doing with the tunes he kept, what he actually did clearly helps define the creative limits possible within his tradition. For example, though the tunes he chose to keep are all melodically complex, unlike some fiddle players in other traditions, he chose only to vary slightly the melodic lines themselves. What he did, rather, was to develop very complex bowing and fingering patterns, but all the while not obscuring the basic melody.⁶ His playing style, which was intricate and subtle, was also very conservative in motion. When playing sitting down (which was the only way I ever saw him play), he always sat as shown in figure 1; right leg crossed over left, fiddle placed on the right side of his chest, bow held between the thumb and the second joint of the index finger, and the fiddle resting on his left wrist. He never moved his bow more than about six inches. He played very quietly and for very short times, seldom playing a tune for more than a minute.

As a young man, Manco Sneed learned and played the music commonly found around his home area of Graham County. He apparently played both for social occasions and for himself, and learned tunes from several sources. It seems, however, that he deliberately sought out certain "old timers" who played, as he called them, "the old-time pieces." Most notable of these "old-timers" was Dedrick Harris.

With his move to Cherokee in 1903, just when he was at the height of his learning years, Manco entered a society and culture which had virtually no

place for Anglo fiddle music. Thus separated from the social outlets necessary to maintain his frolic pieces (and having no desire to travel extensively in order to maintain such pieces⁷), he soon began to reevaluate his music along more personally expressive lines. As time went by, he gradually dropped all but a handful of tunes which seemed to him somehow special and worth keeping. While playing these few selected tunes, he also managed to develop a complex playing style perfectly suited to these remaining pieces. It seems that both his complex, individualized style and limited repertory are a result of his making the choice—over a long period of time—to maintain only certain personally satisfying tunes.

TRANSCRIPTIONS

The three transcriptions below illustrate, from most straightforward to most complex, some basic characteristics of Manco Sneed's style. "Katy Hill," which he clearly distinguished from the similar "Sally Johnson," is perhaps his most "breakdownish" and rhythmically regular piece. In this piece he uses numerous double-stops, a stylistic trait he only occasionally uses in other tunes. What he prefers to do in most of his tunes is bow a low string—usually the G—and let it sound as a drone while playing the melody on the higher strings. Note that although this is one of his fastest pieces, it is, in fact, fairly slow.

"Georgia Belle" and "Polly Put the Kettle On," like several other of Manco's pieces, have a G to F chord progression. Both are good examples of Manco's preference for melodic and rhythmic complexity. "Polly Put the Kettle On" is especially indicative of the rhythmic subtlety and complex bowing patterns so well developed by Manco and "Georgia Belle" shows his use of bow triplets well. Both tunes are also noticeably slower in tempo than "Katy Hill." The recordings from which these transcriptions were made are from a recording made on June 8, 1970, at Mr. Sneed's home, on a Nagra recorder on loan from the Smithsonian Institution. Although Manco was playing in G position on the fiddle, he was tuned one full step low, hence the actual pitch was F. His fiddle, therefore was tuned:



. The transcriptions, originally done to actual pitch, have been transposed as if the fiddle were tuned to G standard. Thanks to Teresa Broadwell and James Dooley for their patience in transcribing these tunes.

KATY HILL

♩ = 110

3d

1. 2. 3.

The musical score for 'Katy Hill' is written on six staves in 2/4 time. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked as ♩ = 110. The melody is primarily eighth and sixteenth notes. A triplet of eighth notes is marked '3d' in the first staff. The piece concludes with a first ending marked '1.', a second ending marked '2.', and a third ending marked '3.' in the second staff.

GEORGIA BELLE

♩ = 100

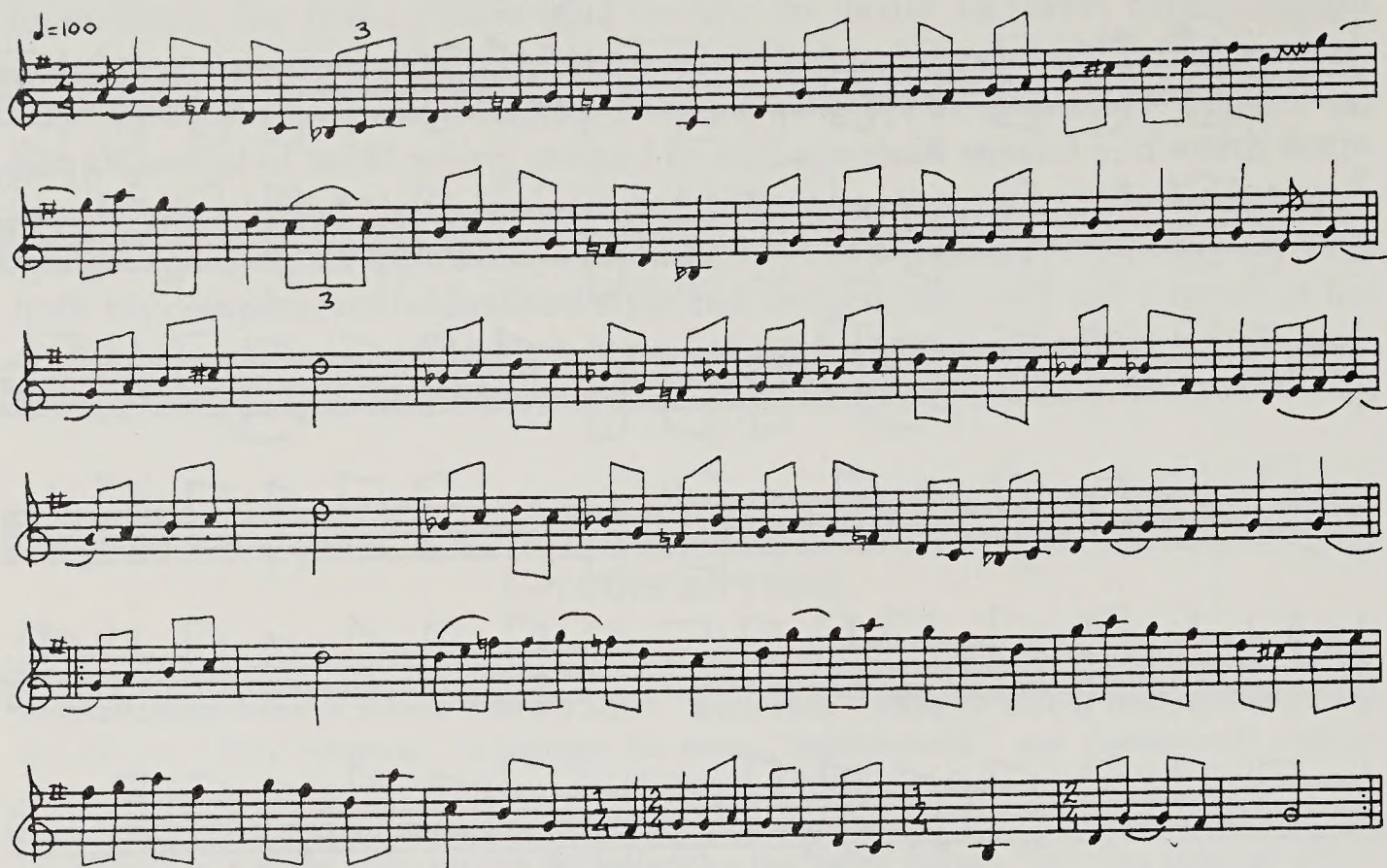
(2)

Fine

3 3 3 3

The musical score for 'Georgia Belle' is written on six staves in 2/4 time. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked as ♩ = 100. The melody is primarily eighth and sixteenth notes. A second ending is marked '(2)' in the fifth staff. The piece concludes with the word 'Fine' in the fifth staff. The final staff contains four triplet markings over groups of eighth notes, labeled '3 3 3 3'.

POLLY PUT THE KETTLE ON



NOTES

1. Henry Glassie, *Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States* (Philadelphia, 1968), p.15.

2. This information was obtained in conversations with Charles Wolfe, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and Joe Wilson, Director, National Council for the Traditional Arts, Washington, D.C. at the 1979 American Folklore Society meeting in Los Angeles.

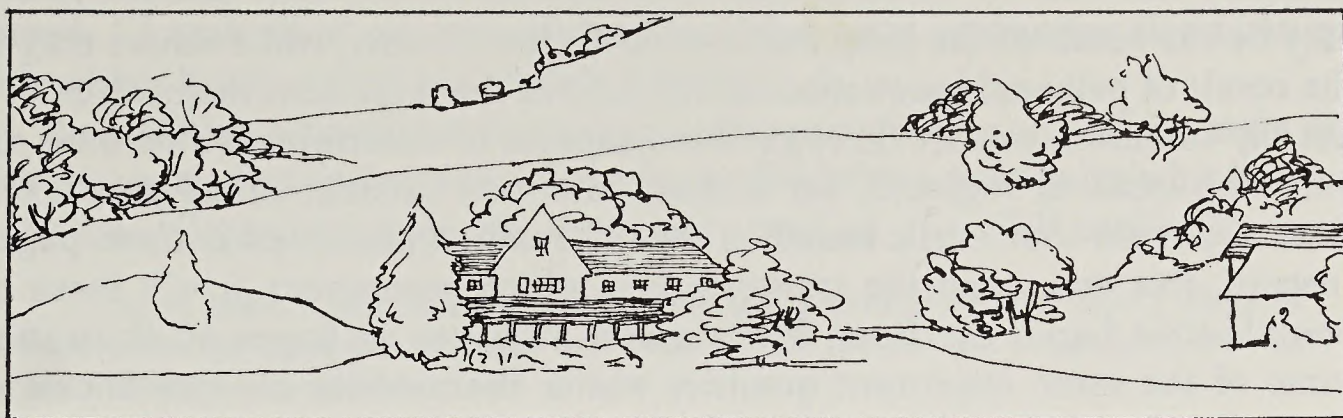
3. For an interesting account of western North Carolina fiddle music in general and "Fiddlin" Bill Hensley in particular see: David Parker Bennett, "A Study in Fiddle Tunes from Western North Carolina," unpublished MA thesis in music, The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1940.

4. I am not certain that David Parker Bennett and "Dr. Bennett" are related, but suspect they are. D. P. Bennett is also from Bryson City, North Carolina.

5. The Hoover Collection, of which these tapes are a part, is deposited in the Archive of Traditional Music at Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana. A catalogue of the Collection is available from the ATM.

6. See Henry Glassie, "Folk Art," in Richard M. Dorson, ed., *Folklore and Folklife* (Chicago, 1972), pp. 271-72, where he makes the point that in folk art of all kinds the basic form of the art is not obscured beyond recognition by ornamentation: "no matter how many curls or swirls the folksinger employs, the skeleton of the melody remains apparent. . . ." (p. 272).

7. This lack of enthusiasm for travel was apparent in conversations with Manco. In addition, his children and friends echo the same sentiment.



The Roan Mountain Hilltoppers: Old-Time Music from East Tennessee

by Bill Thatcher

"Old-time music" has long been a generic term used by musicians and scholars alike to denote the Western European folk-derived dance music traditionally enjoyed by rural white Americans. In practically every corner of the North American continent, fiddlers and their accompanists have for generations provided music for the dancing and listening pleasure of their local communities. Whereas at some mythical time and place, fiddle music may have been the only available means of dance-related entertainment, in the twentieth century it is more often presented as an alternative to other available musics, namely, those of the current mainstream "pop" culture. As such, the "old-time alternative" represents a link with the past, a glimpse at a time-honored tradition whose continuity has spanned across generations, and whose regional character has given it a special distinction wherever it is found.

In the Appalachian region of the southern United States, old-time music has enjoyed considerable popularity, especially in the last two or three decades since the inception and growth of the old-time fiddlers' and bluegrass conventions which take place all over the region. At these conventions one may hear southern old-time music at its best. Old-time bands often travel great distances to participate in the competition for cash prizes and to meet other musicians. It was at one of these conventions that I first met the members of the Roan Mountain Hilltoppers, a family band from Roan Mountain, Carter County, Tennessee.

Like other Southern old-time bands, the Hilltoppers utilize the conventional instrumentation of fiddle, banjo, and guitar, and play many of the tunes that belong to a common Southern repertoire. Also like other bands, the Hilltoppers, however, have their own distinctive sound, some aspects of which

may be the result of the local tradition of Carter County, while others may be the result of personal innovation on the part of the musicians themselves. It is not my intention to sort through these aspects to determine which ones are personal, local, or regional, nor is it my intention to make broad generalizations about old-time music based on the information presented in these pages. Instead, this essay and the transcriptions which accompany it will focus on one old-time band, the Roan Mountain Hilltoppers, in hopes of illustrating some of the more important qualities which characterize old-time music *as they play it and perceive it*, not only in terms of the music sound and techniques involved in producing it, but also in terms of the tradition which surrounds it. Such an examination of tradition includes consideration of the context in which this music is learned and performed, the dynamics which have created a delicate balance between stability and change, continuity and innovation, as well as the attitudes and beliefs which underly the performance of old-time music and hence foster its perpetuation in the modern world.

The music of the Roan Mountain Hilltoppers is in fact the tradition of the Birchfield family of Roan Mountain, Tennessee. The nucleus of the group consists of fiddler Joe Birchfield, Joe's brother, Ellick, playing 5-string banjo, and Joe's son, Bill, playing guitar. Often, Joe's other brother, Creed, will pick the banjo in Ellick's place.¹ While the family's active musicians presently span two generations of Birchfields, Joe claims that music has been in the family now for five generations. As he explains it, music is a God-given gift with which his family has been blessed, although only certain members of each generation are endowed with the inherited ability to carry it on:

It just come on down through the generations, inherited in 'em. It's a gift and God give it to 'em in that generation. God intended for 'em to make music, ya see, 'n he give 'em that talent to make music. He didn't intend for it to be for everybody; he just intended it for certain ones to inherit it.²

Joe's son, Bill, is the "only one o' the bunch" in his generation to receive the "gift." For him, the gift of musical ability implies a responsibility to carry on the family's musical tradition:

See, in other words, Joe, he learned to play. All right, if one of us hadn't learned it, it would've went out when he died. All right, it was given to me to keep it goin'. That's what I think.³

Given their ability, what were the circumstances in which these musicians actually acquired their instrumental techniques? Joe reports that when he and Ellick were youngsters, both their parents played music, as well as aunts and uncles on both sides of the family. Joe is proud to say that he never once took a music lesson, but rather learned simply by watching and listening to the musicians around him. He first started playing banjo in his early teens, and later learned the fiddle and guitar, although fiddle became his favorite instrument. During his youth, Joe's main inspiration and musical mentor was his uncle, Jonny Birchfield, whom Joe describes as "the best fiddler you ever heard play the fiddle." Before he was married, Joe used to visit his Uncle

Jonny, staying with him for months at a time in order to learn the tunes he played. "I took all o' my notes from him," Joe says, expressing the devotion with which he emulated his uncle's fiddling.

In addition to much of Joe's repertoire, certain elements of his style are also recognized as having come from Jonny Birchfield, particularly his bowing technique. Commenting on the way Jonny used to play, Bill exclaims:

I never heard a man in my life with a bow in his hand any better. That's where he took it from [pointing to Joe]; it had to a' been. He had the best lick o' that bow; he could make that train chug, blow, n' all.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about Joe's bowing technique is the generous amount of pressure which he brings to bear with the bow on the strings. In order to facilitate this, Joe tightens his bow to the point where there exists about an inch of space between the wood and hairs of his bow. The extreme tightness of the hairs actually reverses the camber (curve) of the bow, a circumstance which ordinarily reduces the fiddler's control. Joe, however compensates for this by "bearing down" with enough strength and confidence to keep the bow under control. The result of all this is most apparent in the tone quality which Joe gets out of his fiddle—a quality which, like any timbre, is most difficult to describe. Suffice it to say that the volume and tone of Joe's fiddling reflect the strength and power which he exerts while playing. Indeed, Joe himself claims that his "strong bow arm" is what sets him apart from other fiddlers.

Another aspect of Joe's instrumental technique which may or may not have been acquired from his uncle is the characteristic way in which Joe holds his fiddle against his chest. This practice has been regarded by past fieldworkers as characteristically "old-time,"⁴ although other techniques, such as the conventional "under-the-chin" method, are just as common among traditional fiddlers.⁵

In contrast to Joe, who prides himself on playing his tunes just as his uncle had played them, Ellick took a somewhat less conservative stand when learning to play the banjo. As Ellick recalls, most of the older banjo players during his youth (including his own father) played in the "clawhammer" or "knock-down" style. This style basically involves the striking of the strings in a downward fashion using the nail surface of either the index or middle finger. Melody notes played in this way are surrounded by chord strums and by the high drone notes of the fifth string played with the thumb as the hand recoils for the next downward stroke. The clawhammer style is generally thought to be the oldest of the "old-time" folk banjo styles, and is still prevalent among Southern old-time musicians in areas farther east from Roan Mountain.⁶

Ellick says that he doesn't like the clawhammer style because with it, "you can't play enough of the tune." Along with other banjo players of his generation, Ellick opted for a style known as "two-finger picking," or simply "two-finger." Popular in eastern Tennessee and Kentucky, as well as in

western North Carolina, this style involves picking down with the thumb and up with the index finger. Melody notes are played by either thumb or index finger, as are alternating drone notes which, in this style, include the pitch of the first as well as the fifth string of the banjo. Besides this effect of the "double drone," two-finger picking differs from clawhammer in two other ways. First, brush strokes or strums across several strings are not as common among two-finger pickers as they are among clawhammer players. Instead, single notes are preferred; hence, Ellick's concern for playing "enough of the tune." Second, a different tone quality is achieved by plucking the strings rather than "knocking" them. This more poignant quality is further enhanced since Ellick and other players like him wear thumb and finger picks while they play.

Of the three musicians here described, Bill's guitar technique is perhaps the most intriguing. As a left-handed person, he had difficulty getting started because musicians around him refused to show him anything as long as he insisted playing left-handed. Strong-willed, Bill was determined to play, and set about teaching himself. The result is that, relative to the conventional technique, Bill essentially holds the guitar upside down and backwards (so that the lower-pitched strings are nearest the floor) with the added twist of coming down over the neck with his chording hand rather than up from underneath. Bill explains:

Whenever anybody asks me upside down how in the world do you do it, I don't know myself, I'll just tell you the truth it'd be hard for me to explain how I learned. . . I didn't have high hopes about learnin', 'cause I know it's backwards 'n I know good 'n well that I hadn't ever seen nobody else do it that way. I tried it from underneath, I strung it up backward 'n I couldn't do a thing with it, so I started layin' it flat in my lap, like a piano, 'n then I got to where I could turn it up.

It should be mentioned here that the unconventional nature of Bill's physical technique is not reflected in the musical sound which he produces with the instrument. If, for instance, another "old-time" guitar player were simply to listen to a recording of Bill's playing, it is not likely that the listener would find anything unconventional in what he heard, although he might certainly be impressed with Bill's musicianship.

After considering Joe, Ellick, and Bill and the circumstances in which they learned their music, we should perhaps summarize by noting the variety of attitudes among these musicians. Joe admired his uncle's fiddling and sought to play the tunes exactly as he did. Indeed, even today, Joe prides himself on having learned many tunes from his uncle "note-for-note." Ellick, on the other hand, rejected the "clawhammer" banjo style of the older generation in favor of the newer "two-finger" style, but this did not make his music incompatible. Two-finger pickers continued to play the same tunes as did the clawhammer players, and the change in technique from "clawhammer" to "two-finger" was evidently an acceptable one, in so far as it remained within the limits of acceptable variation as defined by the tradition. Bill, who "always had a like for the guitar" and "couldn't wait to get a hold of it,"

was determined to overcome the obstacles of being of the left-handed minority, and consequently arrived at a highly individualized technique. Nevertheless, like Ellick, Bill's technique was deemed compatible and acceptable, for the sound which he produced on his instrument was consistent with the norms of the tradition.

What we have seen here is just an example of the complex of dynamics which direct a tradition such as old-time music, a tradition which has undoubtedly undergone changes through time, but also one whose changes are usually tempered in the interest of continuity and stability. Perhaps the most dramatic change in old-time music which Joe and Ellick have seen in their own lifetimes has to do with the context in which it is played. When Joe and Ellick were in their teens and twenties, they would walk for miles across the mountains to play for dances which were usually held in people's homes. These dances were neighborhood affairs, although Joe reports that often so many neighbors would show up that they couldn't all fit into the house! As each was married, both Joe and Ellick quit playing music and concentrated their efforts on making a living and raising their own families.

It wasn't until some thirty-odd years later that, thanks to the encouragement of Joe's grown son, Bill, the brothers would take up their music again. By this time, however, the customary context of old-time music had changed from the neighborhood dances to regional fiddlers' conventions or "bluegrass festivals" held throughout the summer months. These, of course, are much larger events, often involving thousands of spectators, many of whom camp for the weekend on the festival grounds. The opportunity to win some prize money at these events proved an ample inspiration for Bill to bring his family's music to life again in the form of the Roan Mountain Hilltoppers. When the Hilltoppers attend these conventions, they compete in the "old-time band" category, one of many categories, including "bluegrass band," "flat-foot dancing," as well as separate categories for individual performers. Since 1975, the Hilltoppers have traveled to many of these conventions every festival season, regularly winning prizes and gaining recognition among festival audiences and judges alike.

Besides these large events, the Birchfields also perform in local contexts which more closely resemble the "old-time" house dances of Joe and Ellick's youth. On occasional Friday nights, a small crowd will gather at Roy Troutman's Phillips 66 station in Roan Mountain, where the musicians will face each other in a tight circle while friends and relatives of all ages visit with each other and clog in couples to the music. A somewhat larger and more formal setting is the Saturday night dances at Slagle's Pasture, a lodge outside of Elizabethton, Tennessee, about twenty miles from Roan Mountain. Here, the Hilltoppers are one of several bands that perform on a stage with a sound system while couples clog on the large dance floor in front of the stage.

Now that we know something about the background of these musicians and the situations in which they perform, we should turn to a discussion of the musical sounds they produce. Ideally, an article such as this should be accom-

panied by sound recordings so that the reader can more fully and directly experience the music under discussion. As it stands, however, three musical transcriptions have been prepared for the reader's edification—"Brown's Dream," "Black-eyed Susie," and "Cumberland Gap." These will be referred to in order to illustrate points made in the analysis. The transcriptions utilize Western music notation and two forms of tablature which should (with the aid of the key following the transcriptions) be self-explanatory.

In depicting the sound of the Roan Mountain Hilltoppers, the most important aspect to be recognized seems to be the general consistency of the ensemble's musical texture. This texture may be characterized in terms of a musical hierarchy, the levels of which are determined by the degree of melodic importance accorded each instrument. In this hierarchy, the fiddle is most important melodically, as this is the instrument which actually plays the full melody at all times, while the banjo and guitar play supporting roles melodically, in addition to their rhythmic and harmonic responsibilities. Of these two, the banjo has a stronger melodic role than the guitar. At times, the banjo plays in unison with the fiddle (as in the last measure of "Brown's Dream"), but most of the time the banjo plays a skeletal version of the melody, thus supporting the fiddle an octave below and giving a percussive "punch" to the important notes of the time. (A good example of this relationship may be seen in part A of "Cumberland Gap.") Meanwhile, the guitar either gives homophonic support to this heterophonic relationship, thereby accentuating the roots of the chords on the strong beats (as is the case throughout "Black-eyed Susie"), or occasionally, it joins in the heterophony two octaves below the fiddle and plays an even more skeletal version of the melody than is customarily played on the banjo (see, for example, part A of "Brown's Dream"). Thus, the melodic texture of the ensemble is seen as either overall heterophony or as heterophony between fiddle and banjo with strictly bass and chordal accompaniment from the guitar.

BROWN'S DREAM

Form: ABBBBB
or ABBBB; ABBBBB

The musical score for "Brown's Dream" is presented in three staves. The top staff is for the Fiddle (FID.), the middle for the Banjo (BJO.), and the bottom for the Guitar (GTR.). The tempo is marked as 130. A section labeled 'A' is indicated at the beginning. The Fiddle part plays a continuous melody. The Banjo part plays a skeletal version of the melody, often in unison with the Fiddle. The Guitar part provides a steady bass line and chordal accompaniment. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

* Repeat B fiddle part, one octave lower, 2 times

While the melodic texture exhibits a hierarchy in the order of fiddle, banjo, and guitar, a consideration of the harmonic role of each instrument leads to an inversion of this hierarchy. Certainly the primary role of the guitar is harmonic/rhythmic. Even when engaged in overall heterophony, the guitarist will not sacrifice this role for the sake of playing the melody. Bill seldom plays single-string bass notes without strums in between them, and when he does, these notes will often outline the triad of the chord (as in the last measure of A in "Brown's Dream"). Next on the harmonic hierarchy is the banjo, whose main contribution in this regard is the insertion of harmonic drone notes among the notes of its skeletal melody. These drones are played on the first and fifth strings of the banjo, usually in that order (see "Black-eyed Susie"). The percussiveness and independence of the banjo's drones may be contrasted with the fluidity and synchrony of the fiddle's drones, as the latter occur simultaneously with the melody as a result of the bow being drawn across adjacent strings. Of the three transcriptions, "Brown's Dream" offers the best example of fiddle drones, while all three exhibit extensive use of the banjo drones.

This so-called "hierarchial texture" is generally consistent throughout the performance of any given tune. In other forms of American music familiar to the Birchfields, such as bluegrass and most pop music, musical textures may change in the course of a piece, as instrumentalists take turns playing solos, and in so doing rearrange themselves in terms of their melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic responsibilities.⁷ The Hilltoppers, however (and this is true of many Southern old-time bands), have basically one ensemble sound that they like to stick with, not only throughout the performance of a tune, but also throughout their repertoire.

Related to this consistency of musical texture is the relatively narrow dynamic range employed by the Hilltoppers. Along with Joe, whose penchant for a "strong bow arm" has already been mentioned, the other members of the band also play their instruments at what seems to be a near-maximum volume. The consistency of both texture and volume could perhaps be explained by the traditional function and context of old-time music: that of sup-

plying a musical stimulus for a room full (indeed, at times a house full) of dancers without the aid of electronic amplification. Whatever the reason, the old-time sound of the Roan Mountain Hilltoppers is best described in terms of its strength and stability, and these are of course direct results of the "consistencies" described above.

Form: AAABB

BLACK-EYED SUSIE

♩ = 126

A

FID.

Fiddle upon repeat of A

BJO.

1 1 T 1 T 1 1 1 T 1 1 1 1 T 1 T 1 T T T

GTR.

B

TAG (FOLLOWS A)

TUNINGS

FID. BJO. GTR.

Another important characteristic of the Hilltoppers' music is that the form (i.e., the sequence of high and low parts) in many of their tunes does not conform to the symmetrical AABB pattern customarily attributed to American fiddle tunes.⁸ Indeed, most of Joe's tunes have a high and low part (which he refers to as the "fine" and "coarse" parts, respectively), but the sequencing of these parts is usually asymmetrical and often erratic. A quick perusal of the forms of tunes transcribed here will illustrate this. While "Black-eyed Susie" follows a consistent asymmetrical form, "Cumberland Gap" has two, and "Brown's Dream" three alternate forms, any and all of which may unfold as the tune is repeated during a single performance. In tunes with asymmetrical

forms, the low part is customarily played more times than is the high part, and if the form is erratic, it is again the low part which is repeated a supposedly random number of times before returning to the high part.

Given the erratic part form of some tunes, one might wonder how these musicians know which form they are to follow on any given repetition of such a tune. For instance, if the Hilltoppers' "Cumberland Gap" alternates between AAABB and AAAABB form, who decides which form is taken and how is that decision communicated to the rest of the band? Customarily, it is the fiddler who leads the band into a new part. This is not surprising in light of the fact that the fiddle is the lead instrument on the melodic hierarchy of the old-time ensemble. Some fiddlers, among them the notable Tommy Jarrell of Mt. Airy, North Carolina, use visual cues to signal the other musicians of a change in part. Once he has played the low part of a tune a supposedly random number of times, Tommy will raise his fiddle slightly and the band will together return to the high part of the tune.

CUMBERLAND GAP

Form: AAABB
or AAAABB

The musical score for "Cumberland Gap" is presented in three systems, each with staves for Fiddle (FID.), Banjo (BJO.), and Guitar (GTR.).

- System 1 (Section A):**
 - FID.:** Starts with a treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), and a tempo marking of ♩ = 132. The melody includes a circled '2' above the second measure and a circled '3' above the eighth measure. A bracketed sequence '1, 2, (3), (3), 4' is written above the final measures.
 - BJO.:** Features a single staff with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. It includes a series of tablature notes (I, T, sl, T, I, T, I, T, I, T, sl, T, T, I, T, I, T, I, T, I, T) positioned below the staff.
 - GTR.:** Features a single staff with a bass clef and a 4/4 time signature, containing a series of eighth-note chords.
- System 2 (Section B):**
 - FID.:** Starts with a circled 'B' above the first measure. The melody includes a circled '12' above the fifth measure, a circled '15' above the tenth measure, and a circled '3' above the eleventh measure. A repeat sign is at the end of the section.
 - BJO.:** Features a single staff with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. It includes a series of tablature notes (I, T, I, T, I, T, I, T, I, T, I, I, I, T, I, T) positioned below the staff.
 - GTR.:** Features a single staff with a bass clef and a 4/4 time signature, containing a series of eighth-note chords.

Handwritten musical score for Fiddle, Banjo, and Guitar. The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines. The Fiddle part (top staff) includes a 'TAG (FOLLOWS A)' section. The Banjo part (middle staff) includes a '2. to measure #2' section. The Guitar part (bottom staff) includes a 'TUNING' section. The score is written in a simple, handwritten style with various musical notations including notes, rests, and bar lines.

On watching the Hilltoppers perform, such visual cues are not apparent, but close listening together with examination of the transcriptions has pointed to the presence of certain *sonic* cues in Joe's fiddling that immediately precede certain transitional points in the music. For instance, after the final repetition of the A part in "Cumberland Gap," Joe anticipates the starting note of the B part by a half beat, and in so doing signals that a change in parts is imminent. A similar circumstance arises in "Brown's Dream." Here again, the low part (in this case, the B part) is played a seemingly random number of times (four, five, or six, in no apparent pattern) and some cue is needed to indicate the eventual return to the high part. In this piece Joe consistently plays the last two repetitions of the low part down an octave, a change to which Bill and Ellick do not adjust, except in so far as they are made aware of the imminent return to the high part in eight bars.⁹

Another instance of cueing occurs invariably at the end of a tune's performance, and this involves the use of tags. Again, it is the fiddler who initiates the tag, which is customarily a two-bar descending phrase that usually breaks up the established rhythm enough to signal the other musicians that the tune is about to end. Meanwhile, the banjo and guitar players respond by providing a solid I-I-V-I progression with everyone ending on the tonic. Joe has a number of tags which he uses interchangeably within a given key.

The preceding instances of musical cueing do not function solely as signaling devices, but are also an integral part of the strictly musical quality of these pieces. Joe's anticipated *g* in "Cumberland Gap," for instance, is stylistically consistent with the rest of the tune, wherein heavily accented upbeats and tied-over notes abound in the fiddle line. Indeed, with the possible exception of the tags, Joe likely learned these passages not as signalling devices but rather as part of the overall stream of pitches and rhythms which constitute a tune. The point to be made here is that whether or not they are consciously recognized as such, cueing devices are built right into the music, and this is especially important in a musical tradition which relies not on a conductor or printed score for its correct performance, but rather on the interaction of live musicians.


Among performers of old-time music, the "old-time sound" is readily distinguishable, especially as it differs from the more modern bluegrass music. The Hilltoppers often find themselves performing on the same program roster with bluegrass bands, but they are quick to point out that old-time music and bluegrass, although related, are really quite different. "Bluegrass was originated from old-time music," explains Joe; "they just put a little more extra stuff in it, ya see." By "extra stuff," Joe is referring to the changes which many Southern string musicians instituted as their music moved from a primarily dance-oriented tradition in which the old-time band stood in one corner while other participants danced to their music, to a primarily listener-oriented tradition in which the bluegrass band displays itself across a stage before an attentive audience. Basically, these changes which today distinguish bluegrass from Southern old-time music include the following: 1) the introduction of solo instrumental "breaks" by individual members of the band; 2) an increased emphasis on the singing of songs, generally rendered in a characteristic four-part harmonic style; 3) an increase in the average tempo at which the duple-meter fiddle tunes, or, in bluegrass jargon, "breakdowns," are played; and 4) a general raising of the harmonic keys of the old-time fiddle tunes so that, for instance, tunes that the Hilltoppers play in G and C, a bluegrass band may play in B and E respectively.

While some may interpret these change as "improvements" upon the old-time sound, they should be reminded that old-time music still flourishes alongside of bluegrass, and that many young musicians like Bill Birchfield are insuring its perpetuation. Moreover, bluegrass has never competed with old-time music as a dance-related idiom.¹⁰ While it is faster and perhaps more entertaining to a seated audience, it is by no means suitable for the clog dancing which is still so popular in the Roan Mountain area. On a typical Saturday night at Slagle's Pasture, the dance floor is filled while the Hilltoppers or other old-time bands play, but as soon as a bluegrass band mounts the stage, most if not all of the dancers will automatically retire to their seats to be entertained. As long as these two idioms fulfill such different functions, and as long as there is the demand that both these functions be fulfilled, it is not likely that one will overshadow the other.

As old-time music remains vital as a form of dance-related entertainment, it is also valued for that quality which is inherent in its name—that mystique which reminds listeners that this music dates back to "the olden days," and hence represents a link to the past, a present-day manifestation of the region's heritage. Reflecting upon the revival of old-time music, Joe explains, "Now this old-time music is comin' back for the youngest people to know how olden times come up." Interpreting this statement literally is perhaps not so important as recognizing in it the value that is placed upon tradition. Especially in the midst of this fast and ever-changing media-dominated world of mass culture, one can appreciate the solace of a family tradition whose continuity has withstood the test of time through five generations. As the "gift" of musical talent is passed on to members of each succeeding generation, the

Birchfields of Roan Mountain, Tennessee, carry on a tradition which is valuable not only to their family but also the community and region in which they live. It is hoped that this essay has provided some insight into this tradition, so that others, too, may appreciate its value.

KEY TO TRANSCRIPTIONS

 =slide

↓ or ↑ (small arrow beside or above note-head)=slightly lower or higher than designated pitch


I =played with index finger



T =played with thumb

e| =slide

B- =brush in upward direction

↑ (in guitar part) signifies quarter-note strum in downward direction

↯ =downward strum followed by an upward strum; (time value=)

 =base note followed by upward strum; time value=

NOTES

1. Other musicians from the area also play with the Hilltoppers occasionally, among them guitarist Wesley Holtsclaw and mandolin player Ronnie Vance. More recently, Janice Birchfield (Bill's wife) has performed regularly with the band, playing washtub bass.

2. Personal interview, March 19, 1978.

3. Personal interview, March 19, 1978. (All subsequent quotes are likewise taken from this interview and will therefore not be cited.)

4. Marion These, *The Fiddle Book* (New York: Oak Publications, 1967), p. 5.

5. Thomas Robert Carter, "Joe Caudill: Traditional Fiddler from Alleghany County, North Carolina," M.A. thesis, University of North Carolina, Curriculum in Folklore, 1973, p. 27.

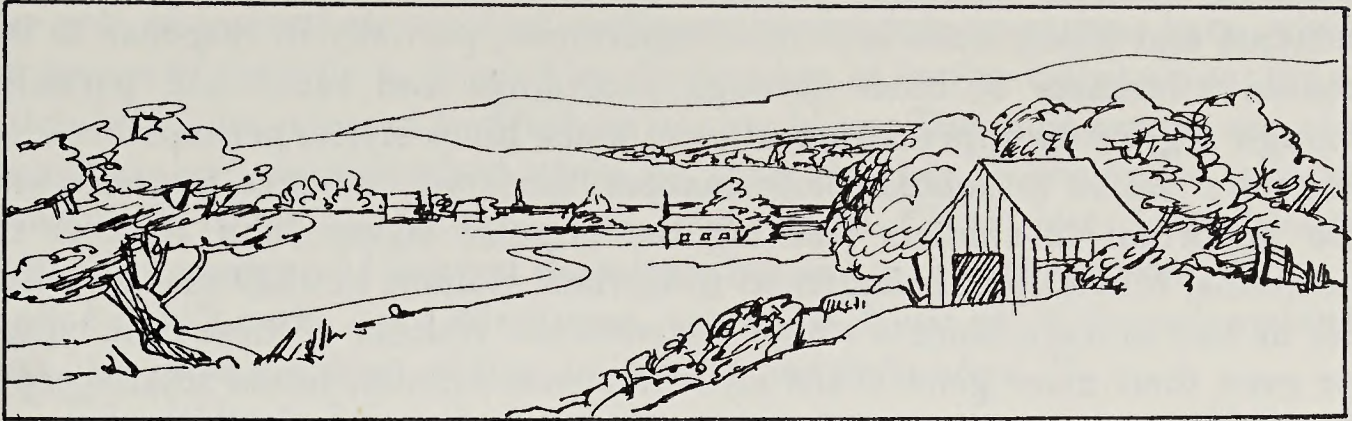
6. C. P. Heaton, "The 5-string Banjo in North Carolina," *Southern Folklore Quarterly*, 35 (March 1971), 67.

7. For a discussion of the variable textures in bluegrass music, see L. Mayne Smith, "An Introduction to Bluegrass," *Journal of American Folklore*, 78 (July-September 1965), 245-56.

8. Phillips Barry, "Instrumental Folk Music," *Southern Folklore Quarterly*, 1 (1937), 44-49, and Thomas Robert Carter, "Joe Caudill," p. 7.

9. I regret to report that no informant feedback has been obtained concerning the issue of musical cucing; more research is needed in this area.

10. L. Mayne Smith, "Bluegrass," p. 245.



“All Counties Have Blues”: County Blues as an Emergent Genre of Fiddle Tunes in Eastern Mississippi

by Gary Stanton

Traditional music is most comprehensible when we think of regions or groups of people holding their music in common, having common likes and dislikes, remembering the same ditties and tunes while collectively forgetting the rest. When we speak of instrumental styles, however, this communal conception has never been accurate. Not all people make music, and the learning of a style of music from older generations or the acceptance of tunes, and especially the composition and recomposition of tunes are the activities of creative individuals which reflect their particular social circumstances. This is not to say that there are not trends and traditions. Shifts in American fiddling in the upland South have occurred with new instrumentation, for example, in the late nineteenth-century acceptance of the banjo and guitar into rural dance music, or the early twentieth-century development of country ragtime and the acceptance of popular rag pieces via sheet music and piano.¹ Still another major shift in the repertory and style of performance of Southern fiddlers began in the 1920s, particularly in response to increased awareness of popular styles of music brought into the home via first records, then radio.²

Two types of tunes became increasingly important to Southern fiddlers during the period following World War I, the waltz and the blues. The melding of the waltz from its popular, concert roots in the nineteenth century to the dominant Southern couple dance in the middle twentieth century has not been explored even briefly. There cannot be a truly comprehensive discussion of traditional dance music in America until we can come to grips with the historical situations in which the waltz was accepted, and until the basic framework of the genre has been explored.³ Along with the waltz, white

Southern fiddlers, especially younger fiddlers, began to incorporate blues elements and blues tunes into their repertoires, partially in response to increased awareness of blues through recordings and radio and partially through a growing appreciation of local black blues styles, perhaps because they were similar to popular performances. Certainly audience response was also important to fiddlers learning the popular styles. John Hatcher of Burnsville, Mississippi, commented to Herbert Halpert in 1939 that as a fiddler he had to learn blues tunes for the contests.⁴ Neither of these tune types, nor even their more generalized stylistic characteristics, found total acceptance by Southern musicians.

Blues pieces were most frequently accompaniment for songs in which the verses were most important and the instrumental renditions an accommodation to the words. The question arises: what was the genuine novelty for fiddlers playing blues; that is, to what extent were the unique qualities of the blues tune transferred and incorporated into a fiddler's repertoire and performance style? In short, what did it mean to play blues fiddle? In order to clarify the influence blues played on the fiddler and his music beyond the constraints of the text, I shall limit my discussion to a purely instrumental genre of fiddle music, the "county blues."

The source or inspiration for Mississippi white fiddlers' creations of county blues is a single release by William Narmour and Sherrill Smith in 1929, "Carroll County Blues" (Okeh 45317), named after their home in central Mississippi.⁵ The title of course in no way predetermined the content of the piece. Recording for Okeh later in 1929 they also recorded "Avalon Blues," named after the town in which they lived,⁶ and at this recording session they also renamed a version of the Texas fiddle standard "Done Gone" after Charleston in Tallahatchie County, Mississippi. What the openly "booster" nature of the title does seem to have done was to stifle lyrics. The tune and the title were widely duplicated. Farther south the Leake County Revelers recorded "Leake County Blues" for Columbia Records in 1930. The Nation Brothers immortalized their home, Lincoln County, in 1935 with "Lincoln County Blues," and Hoyt Ming pushed the northeastern corner of the state with "Tupelo Blues." John Hatcher, of Burnsville, Mississippi, when interviewed by Herbert Halpert, summarized this local chauvinism in describing his own composition, "Tishomingo County Blues": "All the different counties, different counties have the blues, you know, and Tishomingo didn't have any and I felt they needed one, blue enough here sometimes." Halpert asked, "Well what makes it so blue?" "I don't know whether it's hard times or what, I felt though they oughta have a blues, you know."⁷

The source of these tunes, assuming the tune was not composed by the fiddler out of whole cloth, is of some interest. Mrs. Sherrill Smith reported that Willie Narmour and Sherrill Smith overheard the tune of "Carroll County Blues" being whistled by a black farmer, who claimed authorship and called the tune "Carroll County Blues." They then "worked the tune out," which I take to mean set in the vocabulary of their fiddle and guitar duets.⁸

The role of interethnic musical exchange is certainly important here, while the source of the title is clouded by the number of earlier instrumental tunes which had been released by Okeh as county blues. The most crucial act, the recreative act, was described again by John Hatcher. When asked how he made up "Tishomingo County Blues," he replied, "Well, just catchin' tones from other tunes and I just put them together and made me one of my own. . . Well, I didn't make it up all at once, you know, I just got it started, making part of it, and just kept adding to it, till I had it finished."⁹

This desire to bring the tune into one's own repertoire meant the tune and techniques of the performer had to change to accommodate one another. What kind of trade-off was necessary?

CARROLL COUNTY BLUES

Narmour & Smith
OK 45317

Structurally these tunes are not the twelve-bar pattern of the country or delta blues, but melodies composed of smaller six- and eight-bar phrases. The fine part of "Carroll County Blues," for example, consists of two melodic lines, each three descending motifs from the eighth tone to the third tone, and each utilizing slides only in the third and seventh tones, and tied at the end of these lines with long held notes, very long by traditional standards.¹⁰ The combination of these two melodic lines gives us an eight-bar fine part which is then repeated. Contrasting with this descending pattern in the fine part, the coarse strain is a six-bar line with a very narrow melodic scope of a fourth with syncopation strongly suggested throughout, contrasting with the insistent, off-beat strumming of Sherrill Smith's guitar, which acts as a blues guitarist's steady bass, or pedal point, in providing a point of reference for syncopation and polyrhythm.

What's blues about "Carroll County Blues" is more difficult to define than what is not typical Anglo-American fiddling. Three areas are involved: stanzaic patterns, levels of melodic redundancy, and melodic texture or treatment of the notes themselves. Concepts of syncopation and rhythmic novelty, while they may be forms which were borrowed by Afro-American

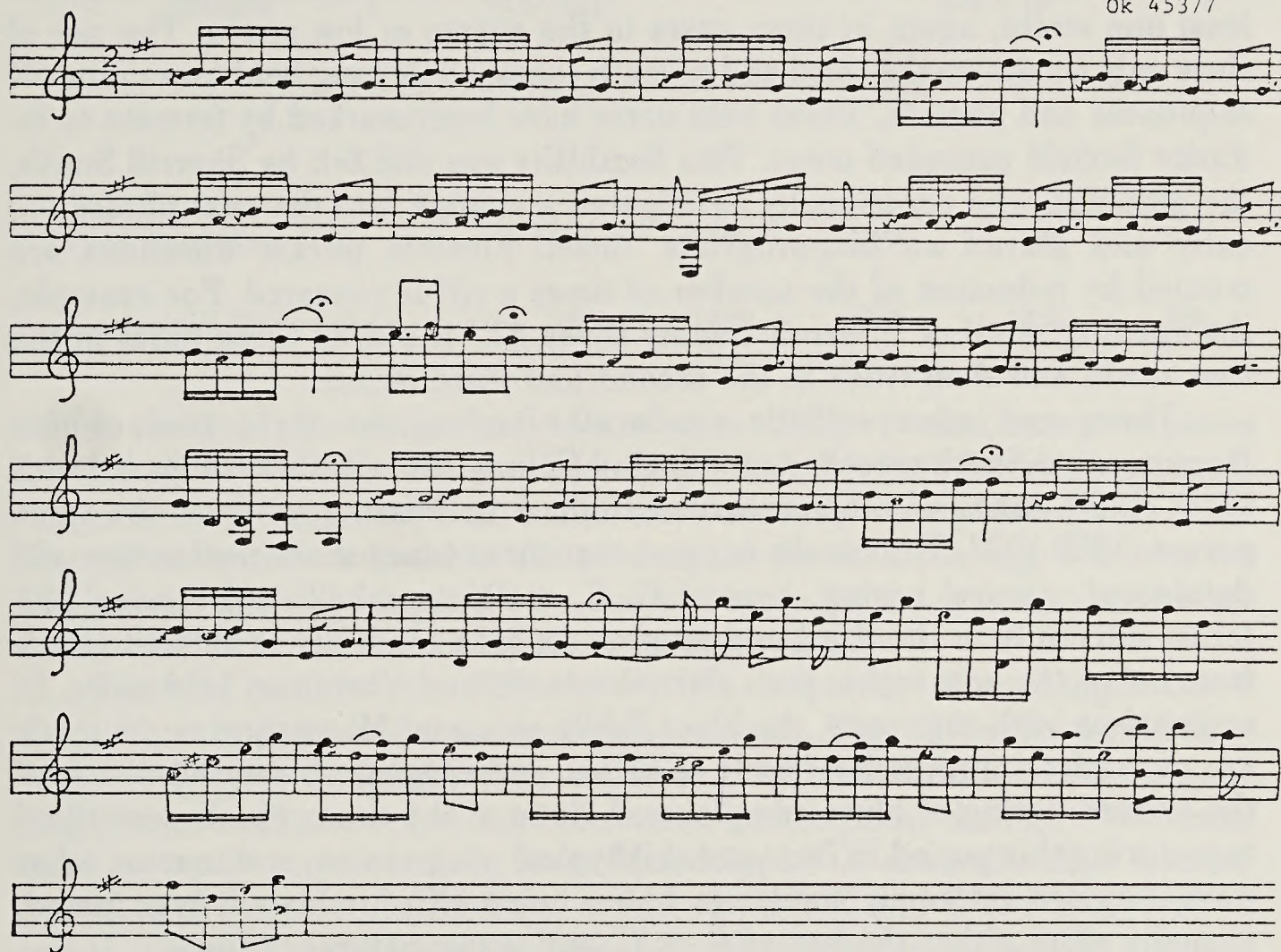
tradition, were not novelties associated solely with blues, but were important in the earlier minstrel tunes as well as the turn of the century piano rags. Anglo-American fiddling is strongly organized around notions of sequential stanzaic patterns of low (coarse) and high (fine) parts in which each phrase consists of four to eight beats, and phrases are combined into patterns of ABAB and AABB. It is also not unusual for a tune to have a fine part half as long as the coarse, so that its repetition in order to produce an even sixteen-bar tune (AABB) is assured.¹¹ This doubling of the fine part in "Carroll County Blues" creates a semblance of AAB symmetry, if not balance, which corresponds to the basic ordering structure of country blues, even when the rhythmic content seems insufficient.

The two musical lines which constitute the fine part of "Carroll County Blues" illustrate another novelty of post nineteenth-century fiddling associated with Afro-American derived music, in which the contour of a phrase is repeated in another chord position, here centered on the tonic (G) and the subdominant (C). We notice further melodic redundancy in the short musical motifs, called riffs, from which the larger tune is constructed. "Carroll County Blues" and other blues of this type are strings of riffs separated by long held notes or a contrasting musical figure. The use of these long points of repose differentiates these modern tunes from Anglo-American dance music traditions of short rhythmic bow strokes in which held notes at the end of the lines of a phrase were often figured by bowed triplets or rhythmic changes in bow direction. The pacing of blues tunes and the use of long held notes relates to larger conceptions of what is music and evinced a change from music as constant melodic or rhythmic motion to music as the alternation between motion and repose. In ensemble sound this emerges as the alternating musical roles of lead and backup and the foregrounding of one musical instrument over all others in a "break" or lead section. Traditional Anglo-American band ensembles in the South did not involve alternating musical roles much before the mid-1920s.¹² All this demonstrates the growing harmonic sophistication of traditional musicians during the early decades of the twentieth century. In the recordings of Mississippi musicians during the 1920's and 1930's, only the Leake County Revelers would occasionally include musical breaks by any instrument other than fiddle.

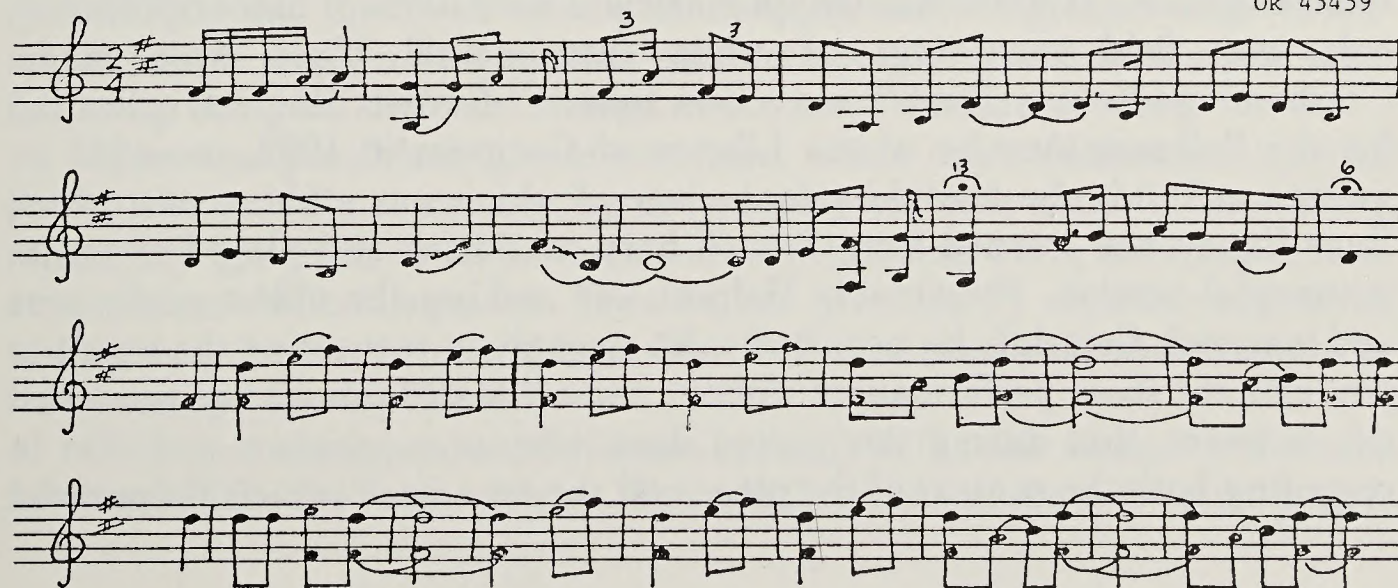
Jeff Titon in *Early Downhome Blues* identifies "blue" notes, or in his terminology, complexes of notes, as a central feature of Afro-American country blues, centering around the third, fifth, and seventh tones of the musical scale, or in the key of C: E, G, and B^b.¹³ In "Carroll County Blues" the slurs or complexes are only present for the third and seventh tones, B^b-B, and E-F natural. Generally, the blue notes are only found in the third and seventh tones in Mississippi Anglo-American fiddling, and consist of a low left-hand attack sliding up to the note in the same bow stroke. Much less frequently a fiddler would begin a slide or slur above the note and slide down, although this does occur (see measure nine of "Carroll County Blues #3").¹⁴ Slurs almost invariably involve anticipation of the beat, creating a different effect

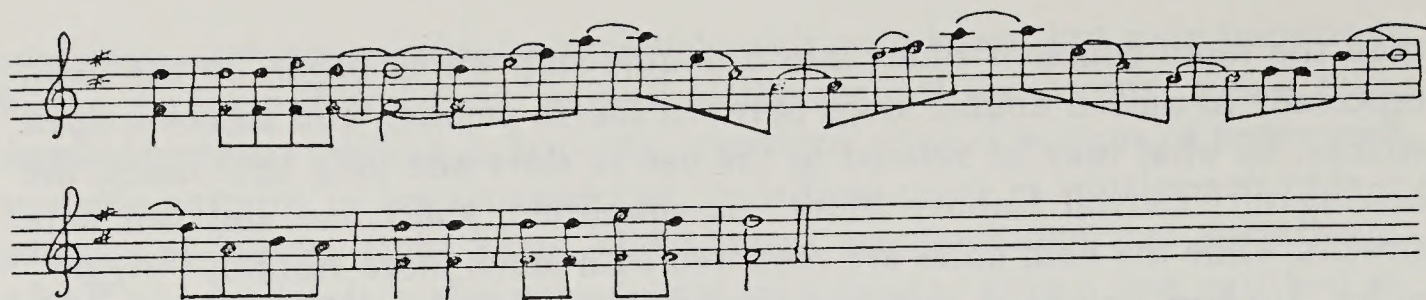
than the more common slides into a double stop which began on the beat, especially in unison double stops between fourth position and adjacent open strings. In what may be related to the use of slurs and long held notes, the bowing of "Carroll County Blues" is simplified, short one and two note strokes, while the held notes are rendered with much more vibrato, "wiggle" notes. Up-bow emphasis and bow-triplets have been sacrificed to a strong overall emphatic rhythmic sense. It is interesting that Narmour confines his more complex bowing to breakdowns and reels such as the fine "Sweet Milk and Peaches," and his slides and slurs to blues tunes.

CARROLL COUNTY BLUES #2

Narmour & Smith
Ok 45377

CARROLL COUNTY BLUES #3

Narmour & Smith
Ok 45459



Because of the commercial success of "Carroll County Blues" and its coupling with "Charleston" ("Done Gone"), the same combination was rendered twice more, as "Carroll County Blues #2" and "#3." These are radically different tunes, yet they maintained the riff as the principal organizing feature, and melodic motion was sacrificed to rhythmic stress within at least one strain, again in these cases in the coarse or low strain. The use of slurs only occurs on the third and seventh tones, while long held tones join riff sequences and phrases. These held notes have been marked by fermata to indicate flexible extended notes. This flexibility was also felt by Sherrill Smith, the guitarist, who occasionally anticipated a change into the next phrase too early and played an inappropriate chord. Flexible phrase durations are created by reduction of the number of times a riff is repeated. For example, the opening motif of "Carroll County Blues #2" is played three times in the first strain and then twice in the second and third strain.

These and other stylistic similarities among the three tunes which Narmour and Smith recorded as "Carroll County Blues" were compared with blues fiddle tunes of other recorded fiddlers in Mississippi from the same period, 1929-1937. The results suggest that these tunes share tendencies: riff dominated, natural tuning, keys of G, C, or D; unembellished bowing patterns; slurs only in the third and seventh tones; a tendency to slurred attack from below the note rather than slurred release; and vibrato on held notes. In comparison with rag tunes, the blues fiddle pieces of Mississippi never made use of ragtime progression (circle of fifths), and rag tunes never made use of the slurred noting of blues complexes.¹⁵ None of the tunes which were titled rags during this period in fact used this typical progression, and in most other ways they are extremely similar to blues, being riff dominated, syncopated, virtually all in either the key of G or C, and using natural tunings.

In the period of the late 1920s and 1930s, when almost a third of the commercial releases of white Mississippi musicians were blues or blues influenced, only two field recordings of white instrumental blues were made, "Tishomingo County Blues" and "Lost John."¹⁶ Herbert Halpert, collecting for the Folksong Archive of the Library of Congress in 1939, recorded no waltzes and only the two blues tunes, one of which was a blues song which Enos Canoy had learned from French harp musicians and played as an instrumental version. Presumably Halpert was seeking the oldest performers and material. Certainly he persisted most strongly in requesting the words to airs and cut short performances without verses. Alan Jabbour has reminded me, however, that during this period discs were at a premium and that in recording both the context of the piece and the tune itself (which Halpert did

very well) some economies had to be made, and variation was sacrificed.¹⁷ What he did record gives us a good, if slanted, picture of traditional fiddle music in Mississippi, and allows us to generalize and compare within the limited scope of this discussion.

	FIELD RECORDINGS	COMMERCIAL RECORDINGS
Waltzes	0	31% (28)
Blues	1.8% (2)	30% (26) ¹⁸
Retuned	52% (59)	8% (7) ¹⁹

	KEY ²⁰	A	D	G	C	F
Field Recordings		31%	34%	30%	5%	0
Commercial Recordings		5%	14%	40%	34%	9%

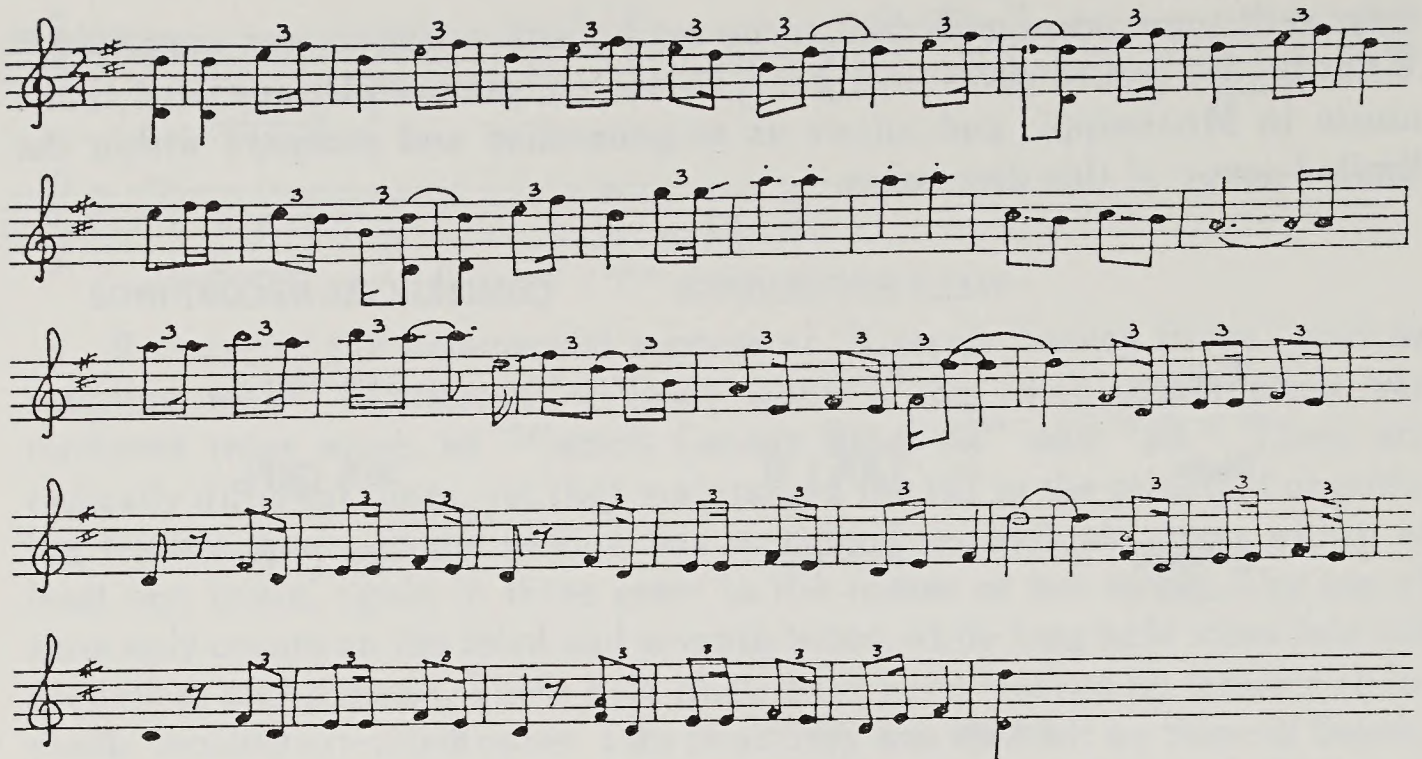
In the field recordings the fiddle was most likely retuned, except in pieces learned off recordings such as "Pass Around the Bottle." Interview evidence suggests that the guitar and banjo were recently incorporated into rural ensembles, introduced within the memory of the men playing. Further, the fiddler was often accompanied by straws beaten by an assistant on the low strings while the tune was played on the high strings.

There is considerable difference in the frequency of retuning between the field recordings and the commercial releases. The difference would have been much more striking had we set aside the Carter Brothers and Son, the only commercially recorded band to retune, and certainly the most traditional band to record commercially from Mississippi.²¹ A dramatic shift also occurred in the preference for keys, a shift towards C and G and away from A and D. These changes appear to be pan-Southern during this period and may be an accommodation to ensemble music with guitar and banjo. Another possibility is that this lower voicing of the fiddle allows a greater range of harmonic double stops in first position and increases the possibilities of the same fingering being on different strings within a riff-dominated tune.

It became possible to create new tunes within this tradition, not by composing an entire melody, but by redeploing melodic material into short, repeatable patterns, or riffs, which were rhythmically even, ensuring that no enjambment difficulties arose. Tension was provided by rhythmic repetition rather than harmonic dissonance. We find this clearly in the example of "Tishomingo County Blues."

This tune revolves around the two-beat riff in the fine strains and on the four-beat riff in the coarse strains. The odd flexibility of the riffs seems largely

TISHOMINGO COUNTY BLUES

John Hatcher
Iuka, Miss.

due to the lack of guitar accompaniment, allowing for a freer rendering of the note values. Yet even with the freedom of the note values the tune is more obviously balanced than consciously varied as in "Carroll County Blues." The fine part breaks down into four distinct sections; the coarse is doubled to create a section half as long as the fine. Most striking, however, is the lack of chord structure. It is a one-chord tune, here in D. Even the most regular of instrumental blues tunes by Mississippi fiddlers, "Leake County Blues," is only a three-chord tune. Most use either one or two chords, more frequently implying the dominant, as in "Carroll County Blues," without actually moving to that chord.

The application of the blues qualities to Anglo-American music injected a range of new tune possibilities by creating a new way of composing. Borrowing and recombination continued to be an important source of musical ideas. "Bankhead Blues," by Shelton and Marshall Nation, borrows the coarse strain of "Carroll County Blues #1" in its entirety. Yet even as Anglo-American style borrowed elements of black blues style, it resisted for the moment relinquishing the primary distinguishing feature of traditional dance music in the South—the fiddle. The blues fiddle tune does demonstrate a growing conception of the fiddler as a member of a band with defined musical roles, in which the fiddle or lead instrument relies upon consistent rhythmic accompaniment to integrate melodic content. By comparison blues fiddling was a modern form which had great impact on the developing band styles of the thirties and forties, both swing and bluegrass, since it constantly plays off the rhythmic roles of the other instruments, and while melodic elaboration may be present, it is not necessary to the development of successful performance.

As strongly as the evidence shows interethnic musical integration continuing to be a force in the twentieth century, we must nevertheless conclude that this cross-fertilization was largely mediated by the power and prestige of

the emerging mass media, recordings and radio. Traditional musicians, especially older men and women recorded before 1939, still played largely the repertoire of the turn of the century. Younger musicians who aspired to play before audiences responded to direct audience requests and their own recognition of popular trends by familiarizing themselves with styles and repertoires which were modern—waltzes, blues, and popular tunes. In the conservative social milieu of rural Mississippi the fiddle was not replaced by the more popular instrumentations; rather, the blues became traditional.

NOTES

1. The three essays published in this issue we presented as papers as part of a panel discussion of traditional instrumental style in the South at the American Folklore Society meeting in Los Angeles in October 1979. Theresa Broadwell helped with the transcription of these tunes. Tom Carter also read a paper not published in this issue which discussed the integration of banjo and guitar into traditional music of Patrick County, Virginia, in the nineteenth century and the subsequent changes in fiddle repertoire and style. The title of that paper was "Stylistic Change in Blue Ridge Fiddling: The Early String Band."

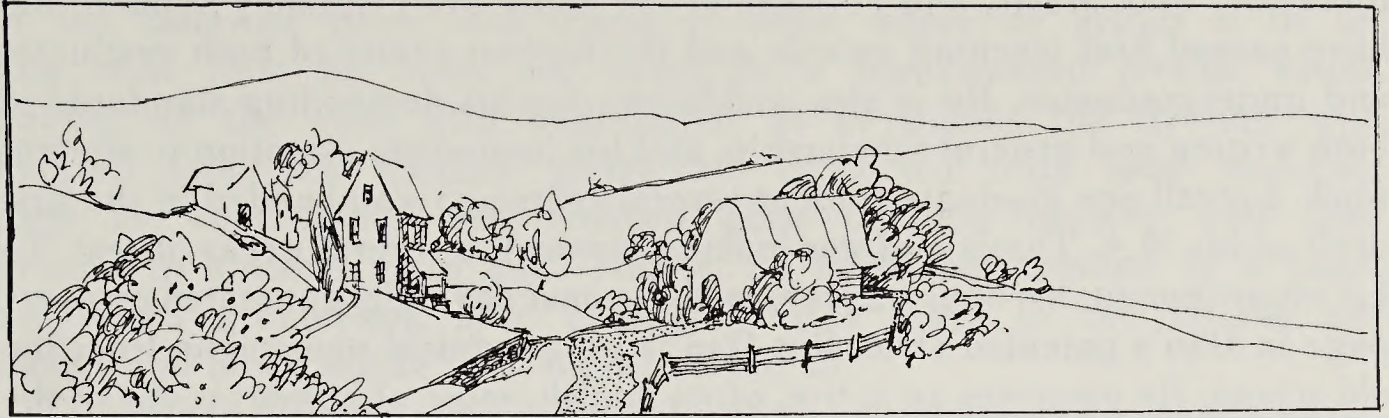
2. Some idea of the impact of popular and ragtime tunes on country music can be gained from Charles Wolfe's "Columbia Records and Old-Time Music," *JEMFQ*, 14:58 (Autumn 1978), pp. 118-25, 144; also important is Gene Wiggins' article "Popular Music and the Fiddler," *JEMFQ*, 15:55 (Autumn 1979), pp. 144-52.

3. Both of the dissertations which treat Southern fiddling, Linda Burman-Hall's "Southern American Folk Fiddling" and Earl V. Spielman's "Study of Instrumental Musical Traditions," neglect the genre and performance style of waltzes, and Alan Jabbour, in his survey of recordings of American traditional fiddling on the Library of Congress *Archive of Folksong* L-62, declined to include an example. Printed examples may be found in R.P. Christeson's *The Old-Time Fiddler's Repertory* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1973).

4. Interview recorded on AFS 2998B, Library of Congress Archive of Folksong. Interview conducted in Iuka, Mississippi, 12 May 1939, by Herbert Halpert as part of the Southern Recording Expedition.

5. Other fiddlers outside Mississippi also recorded instrumental renditions called county blues. The earliest seem to be Walburn and Hethcox, "Lee County Blues," Okeh 45024; Frank Hutchison, "Logan County Blues," Okeh 45121; "Patrick County Blues," Okeh 45389, by Spangler and Pearson; "Duplin County Blues," Romeo 5373, by the Cauley family; "Duvall County Blues," Romeo 5452, by Asa Martin and Doc Roberts. Carroll County Blues was also "covered" by other commercial releases, for example, Doc Roberts Trio, Banner 32713, recorded in 1933. Wade Ward also recorded the tune on a field recording for the Library of Congress, AFS 3764 A3.

6. Okeh 45414, released 25 February 1930.
7. AFS 2299B, recorded in Iuka, Mississippi, 12 May 1939.
8. Henry Young, "Narmour and Smith: A Brief Biography," *JEMFQ*, 7:1 (Spring 1971), p. 31.
9. AFS 2299B.
10. Nine to fourteen beats, for example, at measure four. The duration clearly strains Narmour's sense of bowing, and he found it necessary to change direction twice.
11. The assumption made here is that these blues tunes were in fact dance pieces, and not listening pieces. Little evidence is available to demonstrate this assertion. More paradoxically, blues songs, even with their emphasis on the words, are much more symmetrical, the force of assonance being stronger than the need for musical balance.
12. Over the ten year period of the musical examples examined for this paper the guitar became increasingly integrated into the melodic fabric with figured bass lines. Compare the guitar phrase at the end of the A part of "Lincoln County Blues" (Vocalion 03184) by the Nation Brothers, which is a counter melodic line to the fiddle phrase, with the guitar work of Walter Vincent on "Jackson Stomp" (Okeh 45504). Vincent was a member of the black string band, the Mississippi Sheiks, whose tunes were released on the Hillbilly Series as the Mississippi Mud Steppers. They were one of the few black bands ever to record waltzes.
13. Jeff Todd Titon, *Early Downhome Blues* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1977), pp. 154-65. His work demonstrating the musical context in which blues complexes were used is an important innovation in traditional musical research.
14. I am here only discussing Mississippi fiddlers of this period. Radio fiddlers like Arthur Smith and later bluegrass fiddlers made extensive and subtle use of slurred attack and release, often sliding double stops. Listen to "Freight Train Moan," reissued on County 547, for a fine example.
15. The closeness of rag and blues pieces can be heard by carefully listening to the versions of "Carroll County Blues" where one discerns that occasionally Narmour will bow through a slur which effectively eliminates any distinction I can find between rags and blues in Mississippi.
16. For purposes of this paper Jimmie Rodgers was not included in this sample. Although he was born and raised in Mississippi his musical ideas were popular not local, according to Nolan Porterfield's *Jimmie Rodgers* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1979).
17. I thank Alan Jabbour, Director of the American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, for this comment in a conversation which took place after the presentation of this paper at the American Folklore Society meeting at Los Angeles, 26 October 1979.
18. This number is high because I have included blues songs and tunes as well as popular songs which show blues devices.
19. The only commercially released performances where the fiddles were returned (to EAEA and DADG) were recorded by the Carter Brothers and Son. They account for the total in this category.
20. Three types of evidence were used to determine key. First, actual pitch; second, fingering; and third, the fingering of the guitarist, or in the field recordings, the key which the performer said he was playing. Commercial recordings seemed most often slightly sharp of actual pitch, while the field recordings were widely varied. In these cases I used the A pitch which Halpert supplied as the reference. Still problems arose; for example, when Charles Long tuned his fiddle five tones low (EAEB), he fingered D, and called it D. I called it D as well.
21. Another indicator of the Carter Brothers' traditionality was their choice of keys: A = 30%, D = 10%, G = 60%.
22. "Bankhead Blues" was released on Vocalion 03118 in October, 1935.



1980 Brown-Hudson Folklore Awards

DANIEL WATKINS PATTERSON

Exactly twenty-five years ago Daniel W. Patterson published an article in *North Carolina Folklore* entitled "Turtle Creek to Busro: Notes on Shaker Ballads." As modest as it was, this essay was an accurate harbinger of things to come. Twenty-four years later Dan completed his Shaker "obsession," as he likes to call it, with his massive study, *The Shaker Spiritual*, a work that has been praised as "the finest piece of scholarship in the field of Shaker studies written in this century." No less significant, Arthur Palmer Hudson wrote a headnote for that early article, praising the young author's abilities and concluding: "As man, scholar, teacher, and colleague, he should one day be a prize for some first-rate college or university English department." Clearly Dan has fulfilled all of these early expectations. Not only did he get his post in a first-rate English department at the University of North Carolina, but since 1966 he has been the Chairman of the Curriculum in Folklore, succeeding none other than A.P. Hudson.

Like many others Dan sidled into the field of folklore through a love of music, an interest which is apparent in not only his scholarly work but also his continuing leadership of a shape-note singing group that meets the first Sunday of each month in Chapel Hill. In addition to his many articles and books—including a facsimile edition of *The Sacred Harp*—he has produced recordings of both Shaker spirituals and Social Harp singing. And more recently he has teamed up with filmmaker Tom Davenport and students from the U.N.C. Curriculum in Folklore to create two folklore films, *Born for Hard Luck* and *Being a Joines*, portraits, respectively, of a medicine show performer and a skilled tale-teller and his family. Finally, in keeping with the latest trends in folklife studies, he is preparing a monograph on a school of Scotch-Irish gravestone carvers whose work extends from Pennsylvania to the Carolinas.

Dan's work has always been wide-ranging and highly respected, but his influence as a teacher has been no less important. His classes in American

literature, Folk Music, and Folklore of the South are extremely popular and have earned him teaching awards and the highest praise of both graduates and undergraduates. He is also well-known for his demanding standards in both writing and general scholarship, and his immediate attention to student work. I recall one graduate student several years ago who handed in the first draft of his M.A. Thesis and was looking forward to several weeks of rest. To his astonishment, his opus was returned the next day, fully annotated on every page in Dan's patented style. But Dan is no tyrannical pedagogue from the old school. He possesses an active, often impish, sense of humor; is one of the most affable and approachable professors at Chapel Hill; and in his easy, personable manner seeks to help his students develop their full abilities. The North Carolina Folklore Society honors Daniel W. Patterson as a man, scholar, teacher, and colleague by presenting him with the Brown-Hudson Folklore Award.

—Charles T. Zug III

BURLON B. CRAIG

Ignoring the frequently published assertions that Lanier Meaders of Georgia is the last potter in the United States to use the alkaline glaze, Burlon B. Craig of Henry, Lincoln County, continues to burn five to six kilns of alkaline-glazed stoneware every year. A potter for better than half a century, Burl still turns a wide variety of traditional forms—jugs, jars, churns, pitchers, flowerpots, face jugs, rabbit bowls, chicken waterers . . . and anything else that a customer may care to order. Some of the wares are purchased by neighbors seeking a pickle jar or flowerpots, but the bulk of the output now goes to collectors from all over the Southeast and even farther afield. And Burl needs no advertising when he opens a kiln. As if by magic, several dozen people suddenly appear, eager to purchase some of his graceful jars or bulbous, grinning face jugs. His wife Irene, who has always worked with him and even used to light off the kiln by herself, is the primary sales agent, and before long their yard is again empty of pottery.

Burl's craft lineage goes directly back to the early nineteenth century, when such rural "masters" as Daniel Seagle and David Hartzog established the alkaline-glazed stoneware tradition in Lincoln County. Today Burl's methods are little changed from those of his predecessors. He digs his clay from bottom land on the South Fork

of the Catawba River and trucks it home where he grinds it in his pug mill. Next he turns his forms on a foot-powered treadle wheel, pulling up the walls with both hands as he pumps the flywheel with his left foot. His alkaline glazes are concocted from local materials such as wood ashes and crushed glass or iron cinders, and then ground in a stone glaze mill. Finally, he burns his creation in a huge, wood-fired ground-hog kiln, a truly stirring sight to see as the red flames and black smoke twist high into the air.

To his many friends and admirers Burl is a gentle giant of a man, a warm, amiable person who takes obvious pleasure in the company of others. Generosity is one of his prime traits; he is always giving wares to his friends. I recall a man who once drove all the way from Wilmington, Delaware, to buy some pottery. He arrived too late—all the pottery had been sold—so Burl let him have pieces from his private collection, a collection that will never be very large. Burl is also a remarkably patient individual, always willing to answer the same questions over and over again with interest and enthusiasm. Many times I have seen him break off from a burn or some other task and walk into his shop to show a newcomer how to turn a jug or a pitcher. Rightly, he is proud of his work, but he also desires to teach others so that his skills will endure. For his magnificent stonewares and his genuine concern for his craft, the North Carolina Folklore Society takes the greatest pleasure in awarding Burlon B. Craig the Brown-Hudson Award.

—Charles T. Zug III

STANLEY HICKS

In Stanley Hicks there is an unswerving devotion to ways his parents passed to him from earlier generations of the Hicks and Harmon families of Beech Mountain and the Upper Watauga River Valley. Like his father, Stanley tells stories about Jack, a witty lad who served his mother, his king, and himself by outwitting giants, unicorns, lions, wild hogs, and robbers. Like his father, Stanley makes finely crafted banjos and dulcimers from the walnut and cherry trees which grow on the ridges of his Watauga County farm. And like his mother, Stanley is a musician.

Stanley never sought the attention of outsiders, but it came anyway. The first to come were collectors of folk tales. They were followed by local color writers and photographers. Between growing and grading tobacco, tending the garden, fixing fences, and feeding cattle, Stanley welcomed visitors. The

moviemakers began coming years ago: first the independent non-profit documentarians, then the Hollywood producers on location, then the news magazine crews from the networks. Stanley's world is without strangers, and all were made welcome at the little house perched on the ridge south of Sledrunner Gap. The people still come. Stanley particularly enjoyed the Fox-fire students, and he has made friends among the American studies and folklore scholars who began coming recently, asking questions he has answered so many times before.

What these visitors have found is a hewer of wood, a singer of old songs, a man with a storehouse of ancient tales. There are many banjo players, but few enjoy playing as much as Stanley does; and the enjoyment shows. Though he may have told a story hundreds of times, his eyes sparkle and there is excitement in his voice. These are his father's ways, and Stanley loves them.

It was not isolation that caused Stanley to continue the arts his father and mother handed to him from the generations before. Stanley has never been isolated. He always knew the way to the road. Like many others in the Blue Ridge, he occasionally had to travel it in order to earn a living for his family. He worked for an orchardist in upstate New York, for a manufacturing plant in Virginia, for a chicken farmer on the North Carolina Piedmont. He saved his money, returned to his beloved Watauga County, and bought his small farm. He continued the arts of his parents because he prefers them, and he is a resident of North Carolina by choice.

Although he is a most reluctant traveller, Stanley has on occasion been persuaded to take his wares to concert halls and festive gatherings in distant places. As singer, dancer, musician, instrument-maker, and story-teller, he has been a fine representative of his family, the Blue Ridge, and the state of North Carolina. He recently met upwards of 7,000 city dwellers in a concert hall. The stage became Stanley's front porch for thirty rapt minutes, and when the fiddlers came and Stanley showed the jumping-jack flatfoot dance he learned at Beech Mountain play-parties of long ago—well, I wish you could have been there and heard that crowd.

In presenting the 1980 Brown-Hudson Award to Stanley Hicks, the North Carolina Folklore Society recognizes a great native artist who has stimulated and taught others. Through their interest and documentation he has provided many Americans a glimpse of the rich folk arts of his family.

—Joe Wilson

Director of the National Council for the Traditional Arts

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Selections from
"Folk-Ways and Folk-Speech"

by Rogers Whitener

VOL. 29, NO. 1 SPRING-SUMMER 1981

NORTH CAROLINA FOLKLORE JOURNAL

THOMAS MCGOWAN, editor

JOHN BIRD, KATHLEEN MCGOWAN, and JOHN SOMERVILLE,
editorial assistants

The *North Carolina Folklore Journal* is published twice a year by the North Carolina Folklore Society with the assistance of Appalachian State University. Memberships in the Society, which include subscriptions to the *Journal* and the quarterly *Newsletter of the North Carolina Folklore Society*, are \$150 for life members, \$4 per year for individuals, and \$6 for institutional and library members. Membership dues should be mailed to the North Carolina Folklore Society, c/o Department of English, Appalachian State University, Boone, NC 28608.

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The *North Carolina Folklore Journal* publishes studies of North Carolina folklore and folklife, analyses of the use of folklore in literature, and articles whose rigorous methodology or innovative approach is pertinent to local folkloristics. Manuscripts should conform to the *MLA Handbook*. Quotations from oral narratives should be transcriptions of spoken texts and should be identified by teller, place, and date.



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NORTH CAROLINA FOLKLORE JOURNAL

VOL. 29, NO. 1

SPRING-SUMMER 1981

Selections from “Folk-Ways and Folk-Speech”

by Rogers Whitener

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Front Cover: Rogers Whitener (l) and Alfred Adams of Boone look over a mechanical toy made by Willard Watson. Deep Gap, N.C., 1974.



Foreword

When I was arranging for John Joines, from Poer's Knob in Wilkes County, to tell tales at Appalachian State University, he had one question: Would Rogers Whitener be at the performance? On the appointed evening, Mr. Joines arrived, a large old book under his arm and a potted plant in hand. Folk medicine is a favorite subject in Rogers' reader-response columns; Mr. Joines wanted him to look over a family herbal. Rogers had once mentioned some traditional lore about hop plants in a column and lamented not having such a plant. Now he had his own plant and a set of traditional instructions from Mr. Joines explaining where and how to plant it and what to do with it. This exchange of tales, beliefs, and objects between Rogers and Mr. Joines is like numerous others—either by mail or in person—that have resulted from Rogers' weekly newspaper column, "Folk-Ways and Folk-Speech."

Rogers began that column in 1973. Borden Mace, then Director of the Appalachian Consortium, had suggested Rogers write it so that people in the Southern Appalachians could share remembered bits of lore and history from their mountain heritage. So, Rogers began to put in print items of folklore he collected while sipping coffee at Joe Miller's Boone Drug Company or standing talking in the aisle of the local Harris-Teeter supermarket, and his mailbox, which I shared for three years, began filling with letters written in the script taught in mountain schools during the first decades of this century. Over four hundred columns and hundreds of letters later, thirty newspapers in North Carolina, Virginia, and Tennessee have published "Folk-Ways and Folk-Speech" received through Appalachian State University's news bureau.

Rogers' columns are popular journalism, but they should not be dismissed by folklore scholars for being so. He reports authentic folklore; his subjects are not the folksy "fakelore" that has been published in some more pretentious books. Letters to Rogers and conversations reported in his columns have become important sources for items of previously unappreciated folklore. Another important result is that columns have brought to the attention of the folk themselves some of the important concepts folklorists distinguish in their discipline.

Rogers may not use the terminology of folkloristics in his column; however, frequently columns may touch on ideas about variation, function, context, or even non-rural folklore. While the professional folklorist may argue for more systematic research and documentation in them, the columns have fostered an awareness of folklore and also of folkloristic distinctions. As described in the citation for Rogers' Brown-Hudson Folklore Award presented by the North Carolina Folklore Society in 1979, "Folk-Ways and Folk-Speech" has developed "a careful appreciation by the folk themselves of their customs, sayings, superstitions, stories, and songs" and has served "as a means by which a letter writer, realizing through Rogers' writing the value of local folk culture, is able to express his own study and appreciation to the public at large."

These selections from Rogers Whitener's "Folk-Ways and Folk-Speech," join two other *North Carolina Folklore Journal* monographs written by Brown-Hudson Folklore Award recipients—the late Paul Green's collection of narratives from the Cape Fear Valley and Joseph Clark's study of madstones. The North Carolina Folklore Society presents them with pleasure to its members and friends.

—Thomas McGowan
Boone, N.C.

Folk-Ways and Folk-Speech



of SOUTHERN APPALACHIA
with Rogers Whitener

Send your suggestions for column material to Rogers Whitener, Box 376, Boone, N. C. 28607.

Original headline design for Rogers Whitener's reader-response folklore column.

The Farmer and the Chicken-Hawk

June 23, 1973

Appalachian folktales are numerous, but they represent a folk division that I seldom use in this column, primarily because such stories lose a great deal in the writing down.

But when one hears a good teller in action at the local restaurant, drug store, or country store, it is difficult not to try to get his words on paper. The story teller usually swears that his tale is a true one, and if he is a successful teller, he may convince his audience that the events related have just recently occurred when actually he may simply be refurbishing an old story.

For the past several weeks I've been trying to run down a chicken-hawk story which sounds as if it may have been used numerous times. Of the dozens of people I have questioned, however, I have found only one person who recognizes it, and he is the person who originally passed it along to me.

Joe Miller, a Boone druggist who also has a keen interest in folklore and folk crafts, tells of the Wilkes County farmer whose flock of chickens had been sadly diminished by a hawk which showed an uncanny ability to swoop down, grab a young chicken in his talons, and dodge the shotgun fire of the outraged farmer.

Finally the farmer became so irate that he swore specific personal revenge on the hawk—shooting would no longer satisfy his need. So he tied a choice pullet to a stake inside a partially suspended cage and



Joe Miller, druggist and town raconteur, with Rogers Whitener.
Boone, N.C., May 1981.

waited for the hawk to claim his victim. The hawk obliged, knocked over the stick which held up the cage, and became the farmer's prisoner.

The farmer then debated the nature of his revenge. His first impulse was to pluck every feather from the living bird and tie it to a stake in the blazing sun. Then he considered the possibility of clipping its wings and talons and tossing it into the pen with his prize fighting cock.

Eventually he came to the conclusion that the only satisfactory measure would be to tie a stick of dynamite to the hawk, toss it into the air, and watch it be blown into bits of nothing by the exploding dynamite.

Private revenge was not sufficient for the farmer, who called in his neighbors and friends to witness the execution of his plan. Putting on a pair of heavy gloves he carefully pulled the offending chicken hawk from the trap and with the aid of his son attached a stick of dynamite to the hawk's leg, trimming the fuse short enough to cause the dynamite to explode shortly after the hawk was given his "freedom."

The fuse was lighted, the hawk tossed into the air, and the farmer set to enjoy his revenge. The hawk, as if reading his destruction in the hissing stick attached to his leg, decided to end things his way. Circling twice over the heads of the assembled onlookers, he glided to a perch on the chimney of the farmer's house, while the fuse sputtered and the ground observers ran for cover.

In desperation the farmer, his wife, and son yelled at the hawk and threw sticks and rocks in an effort to scare the bird from its perch.

Finally a rock grazed the hawk, it flew from the chimney, the dynamite exploded, and the air was filled with feathers and shingles. The revenge was complete but costly: dejectedly the farmer surveyed a roof from which all the shingles had been leveled to the roof line. From that day forth his chickens fended for themselves.

If there are readers who recall similar tales (or true happenings), I would be pleased to see them and perhaps use some of them in future columns.

The Farmer and More Pests

June 30, 1973

The farmer and the chicken-hawk story used in this column recently brought a response this week from Mr. Edwin E. Judkins of Bristol, Virginia, in the form of comment and an additional story, both of which are much appreciated. He writes:

"Dear Mr. Whitener: I read with interest your article in the [Bristol] *Herald-Courier*. I had never heard the story about the farmer and the hawk.

"I have heard a story about a farmer shooting birds in his cherry tree. The birds were eating all the cherries, and the farmer decided to do something about it. This was in the days of the muzzle-loader shot-guns. The farmer could not find any shot in the house, so he loaded his gun with a box of tacks. Then he went out and fired and tacked birds up all over the tree. However there were so many birds they pulled the tree up by the roots and flew away with it."

Some weeks ago I talked with Jim Byrd, of Valle Crucis, North Carolina. At that time he told me of a number of ways early farmers in that area fought the insects which invaded their fields and gardens. He also passed along a couple of stories that undoubtedly have been told many times around the huge pot-bellied stove in the H.W. Mast general store.

The first story emerged as a by-product of his suggestion for using garlic to ward off certain types of insects from vegetable and flower gardens.

"There was a man who lived in the Valley," says Jim, "who not only used garlic to fight the bugs, but liked it so well that he ate it three times a day. He could blow his breath in a ground hog's hole and out the varmit would come gasping for breath.

"His breath was so bad that when he came down to Mast's store to do a bit of trading, he ran everybody out of the store except H.W., who



Jim Byrd at home. Valle Crucis, N.C., June 1981.

couldn't smell. This way he and H.W. could transact their business in private."

Jim also tells the story of Uncle Willie and the blackgum tree.

"Uncle Willie was working a garden and there was a tremendous blackgum tree in the middle of it which shaded his vegetables so much that the garden didn't produce the way he figured it should.

"For two years he worked the garden and kept asking around how he could kill the tree without having to cut it down and haul it off. Finally he came to me and I gave him a remedy.

"What you do, I said, is get you a brace and bit and bore you a good-sized hole all the way to the heart of that blackgum. Then you find you a sweet tater just long enough and skinny enough to fill up that hole. Poke the tater in the hole and seal it up. I guarantee you that blackgum will be dead in ten days—of the heartburn."

Willard Watson's Hickory-Stripping

June 11, 1973

Despite the fact that I have lived in or near the Appalachians most of my life, I have seen few craftsmen in the preparatory stages of their work.

I recently made this observation to Willard Watson, who makes mountain toys and other craft items at his place on Wildcat Road, some ten or twelve miles out of Boone.

"Well, we'll just have to remedy that," said Willard. "One of these days I'm gonna take you and Doc [Watson, the folk singer] up in the woods and show you how to strip hickory to bottom chairs."

A few days later Willard, Doc, and I accompanied by several Appalachian students and faculty members, headed into the woods, armed with a double-bitted axe, a drawing knife, and numerous questions.

After a quarter of a mile of uphill walking, Willard halted the group and pointed to the object of his search—a black-bark hickory tree some six to eight inches in diameter. While the rest of us watched, he began shaving the bark from the tree with a drawing knife. "I leave it standing as long as I can reach the bark," he said, "for that way it don't tire my back as much."

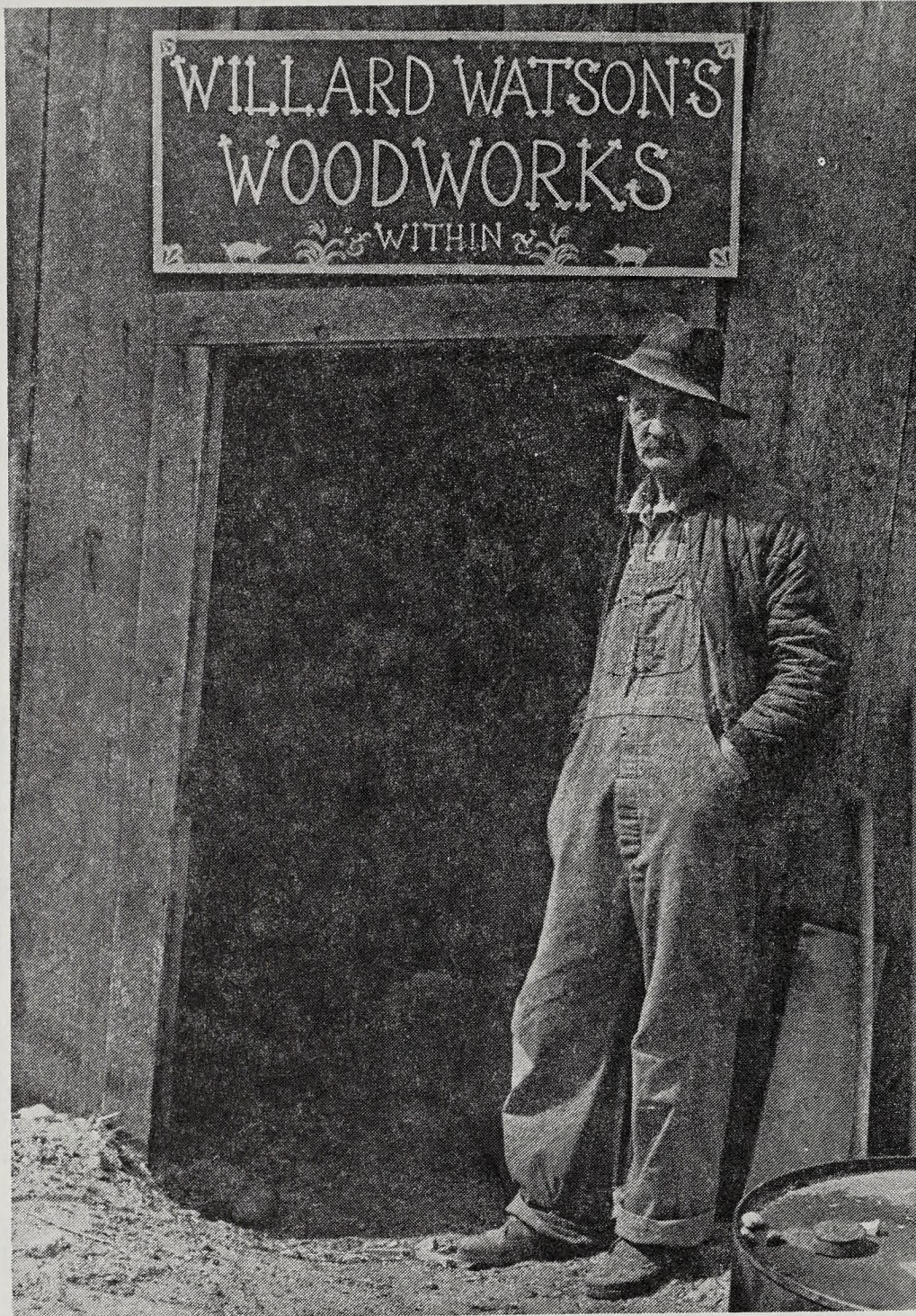
In a short while he had shed his shirt and also cleared a sizable portion of the trunk. Next he put the axe into play, chopping with sure, swift strokes to bring the tree down. Then it was back to the drawing knife until approximately twelve feet of the tree trunk had been cleared of its bark.

The knife work came next. Inserting the point of the blade into the soft underbark, Willard carefully ran it the length of the peeled trunk, then moved back to repeat the operation three-quarters of an inch from the first cut.

"I generally use a chalk line to keep the cut straight, but I forgot it this time so I'm depending on the grain to help me guide my knife." The cut again ran straight and true.

At the end of the second cut, he pulled the knife blade across the cut, lifted it slightly, and then swiftly pulled a twelve-foot strip from the trunk.

The difficult part came next. Inserting the knife blade point into one end of the strip, he carefully "rived off" the top layer, leaving a strong, flexible strip suitable for weaving into a chair bottom. Again and again he repeated the operation while Doc carefully wound the strips into tight rolls and tied them off. According to Willard these would be used later when he and Doc found time to work on their



Willard Watson before his workshop. Deep Gap, N.C.

chairs. Doc, according to Willard, is an expert chair bottomer, having been taught the art as a child by his father. "He can bottom in rows (patterns) which I never could do."

"We used to have to work up the stripping right after we cut it," Willard continued, "but now we just seal it in a plastic bag, put it in the refrigerator, and hold it till we're ready. That way it stays just as limber as when it was cut off the tree."

Willard favors white hickory or white oak for ease of working, but he is beginning to have trouble locating these varieties, especially white oak. The hickory, however, black or white, he recommends strongly for durability. "You just can't hardly wear out a good hickory bottom. I've got a chair in my house that was wove over sixty years ago and it's still strong. You might break it, but you ain't gonna wear that bottom out!"

The stripping finished and the lesson over, we retraced our steps to Willard's house where the hickory harvest was stored in the refrigerator.

"Now you call me in a few days and we'll see if we can't work on a chair for you. Doc and me will put a hickory bottom in it that will outlast your lifetime." These were Willard's parting words.

A Talk with Docia Triplett

August 29, 1973

In a time when our mountain roads are glutted with cars, when bulldozers endeavor to lay every mountain and hill low, when neon signs compete with myriad other neon signs for attention, it is still occasionally possible, thank goodness, in Appalachia to find an unpaved road, a rustic cabin, and talk of other days.

I found such a day and such a road this week on an afternoon jaunt near Triplett, North Carolina, plus a talk with Mrs. Docia Triplett, an 88-year-old widow who has been living alone in a small mountain cabin for the past 23 years.

Mrs. Triplett, now forced by rheumatism to spend almost all her time in her fireside chair, is an amazingly strong spirit who remembers clearly and speaks happily of early days in the Appalachians.

One of 15 children (4 boys and 11 girls) born to Hanson and Jane Triplett, "Doch" was an apparent favorite of her father's, perhaps because she took so readily to the necessary work on a mountain farm.

"I remember when I was three being so proud of him for building our new house [a three-story one to take care of his large family] that I wanted to help. So I gathered up several shingles under my arm, held to the ladder with all my grip, and carried them up to where he was working. He was so scared at seeing me on the scaffold that he nearabout fainted. But from that time on he wanted me with him while he was doing his work."

And according to Mrs. Triplett, there was plenty of work for both of them as well as for the rest of the family.

"He taught me all kinds of work that he did on the farm. I learned to plow with the big turning plow as well as the shovel plow, both pulled by mule. I learned to harrow and brush, to catch up the mules and take care of them, and to haul timber to the sawmill after my sister and I had downed and measured it."

The "downing" was done, of course, with a crosscut saw, which sometimes buckled and bent when caught in the pinch of the tree, but had to be used without complaint for fear of reprimand over "folding" the saw.

Mrs. Triplett remembers little time for games or for school, since all the children shared in the work of the farm. "Oh, I played jackrocks and sometimes made dolls out of rags or corn shucks, but when the weather was good I had work to do."

"School?—that was for rainy days. When bad weather struck I walked about two miles to a one-room school at Buckwheat. One teacher taught seven or eight grades and we all sat on split-log benches."

Infrequency of attendance had little association with modern truancy, according to Mrs. Triplett. Parents were not compelled to send their children to school back then so they kept them at home to work during suitable weather.

"So I didn't get much formal education—just enough to learn to read and write a little. But I got a good practical education at home so I was ready to be a working wife when I was married and moved into this house when I was 23."

According to Mrs. Triplett, she then helped her husband as she had her father, and she added other chores.

"I canned chicken and hog meat, put up sausage, made cheese (and sold many dollars worth!), salt-cured hams, dried up leather britches, apples, peaches, turnip greens, mustard, and wild greens. For a time I made homemade wine, but I decided that was wrong and I quit it."

Did any of her neighbors practice moonshining, she was asked.

"Law, yes. There were a lot of people who made whiskey. There used to be a still just down the road called the Stillhouse Place. Back then people felt they had a right to do as they pleased, and the law seldom came around to bother them."

Now the work days are over for Mrs. Triplett, but her pioneer wisdom, her strength and endurance are still apparent. For despite living alone in an almost helpless state, she seldom feels lonely. She is in touch with the present through her radio, her telephone, and drop-in friends—with the past through the clarity of her memory.

Cranberries

November 21, 1973

I noted recently that this column has been in existence for almost a year and that I have heard from hundreds of people on an infinite variety of topics. It has occurred to me, however, that not once do I recall the mention of cranberries—an edible fruit, decorative item, coloring agent, folk remedy, or what have you.

I have puzzled over this a bit, for I remember by way of fifth-grade geography that at one time cranberries were supposed to abound in marshy areas from North Carolina to Newfoundland. And I know, of course, that towns called Cranberry exist or existed in a number of southern Appalachian states.

I know, too, that cranberry *sass* has been a favorite dish in this country from the time of the Puritans, they having adapted the *ibimi*, or bitter berry, to their own purposes after being taught by the Indians to use it as a red dye, a medication, and (pounded) as a food to serve with deer and turkey.

As time went by resourceful New England cooks evolved more and more cranberry recipes—steamed cranberry pudding, cranberry tarts, cranberry pie, cranberry relish. These recipes and other uses of the *marsh ruby*, as it was sometimes called, eventually found their way into the Appalachians. The wild cranberries were already here.

Mountain housewives also discovered that these wild berries made good jellies, jams, and marmalades either by themselves or combined with other fruits, such as apples, pears, and gooseberries.

Children learned that cranberries could be made into necklaces and that a Christmas tree—long before the advent of tree lights—could be made to glow with color from strings of the red-jacketed berries, which remained plump and shining for weeks. They learned, too, that as a tonic, cranberry juice had sulphur and molasses beat all hollow—at least as to taste!

All of which brings us back to the original question—why no mention of cranberries in the numbers of letters and comments which have come my way? Perhaps D. L. Stanbery of Laxon, North Carolina, has the answer.

“Years ago a small stream ran through my place. It had a shallow bed and the land on both sides was wet and marshy. There was one area—no more than ten or twelve feet square—where I found a thick covering of bushes. They grew real close to the ground, and along in September they’d be covered with berries. Many times I picked five or six bushels from this one little patch. They were big, too—much bigger than the type you buy in stores today.

“Then about twenty years ago I decided to deepen the stream bed to get rid of some of the boggy land. But when I brought in the ditcher and lowered the water level, the cranberry bushes disappeared. I guess that’s what has happened other places in the mountains where they once grew. Since the backhoe came into use, you just don’t find marshy land very often, and that’s the kind of place the cranberry needs to grow.”

Pity, isn’t it? Somehow that Thanksgiving *sass* or Christmas relish would seem twice as good to me if I knew its tart flavor came from genuine Appalachian wild cranberries!

Watauga County Craftspeople

December 12, 1973

Craft fairs continue to grow in popularity in the Appalachians. Whether they feature only a handful of demonstrating craftsmen or number dozens of skilled artisans, they attract the young, the old, and the in-between, all, perhaps, in their own ways in search of their past.

Such fairs are somewhat like family reunions. In a specific geographical area, the same craftsmen will turn up year after year, not merely to show the products of their skills but to renew friendships, catch up on the news, and swap a few craft items. Their patrons appear just as faithfully, not just to make purchases but to visit around.

A relaxed, friendly atmosphere prevails, somewhat akin to that when small town churchgoers linger at the church door after service to visit a spell before heading home for Sunday dinner.

This week at the annual Appalachian State University Christmas Craft Festival, I, too, renewed acquaintance with several craftsmen—and craftsladies—whom I have observed at work over a period of many years.

Stella Barnes, to start. A native of Perkinsville, North Carolina, she has been fashioning honeysuckle baskets and weaving broomsage mats and other craft items for approximately fifteen years. “Normally I participate in seven or eight major fairs and festivals each year,” she says, “and they keep me on the run trying to make up enough items to sell. I especially enjoy this Christmas fair, though, because the students seem so interested in what we’re doing.”

Then Mrs. D. W. Cook, a real crafts veteran, who practices “one of the oldest crafts in this country,” the construction of knotted cotton bedspreads. Since 1916 she has been making such spreads in various



Bertha Cook working on a knotted bedspread. Sands, N.C., August 1980.

patterns most of which can be traced back to England. "I have demonstrated for the past twenty-six years at the annual Craftsman's Fair in Asheville," says Mrs. Cook, "and I also helped to start the State of North Carolina Village of Yesteryear at Raleigh."

Mrs. Cook, winner of a Brown-Hudson Folklore Award given this year by the North Carolina Folklore Society, notes that she is having more and more difficulty in finding cotton material for her spreads: "Not only is it hard to get, but I now pay about four times what I once paid per yard. I'm really working for pennies when I make a spread, but I enjoy it so I keep on doing it."

Ina Hagaman is a self-taught craftsman who makes a variety of items of cornshucks. Starting out with flowers, she moved to dolls and then to the creation of familiar characters from children's literature—

Jack and Jill, Red Riding Hood, the Wicked Witch, and others. All garments are carefully fashioned of shucks and the hair is constructed of cornsilk.

Mrs. Hagaman gives credit to WAMY, a western North Carolina segment of OEO, for her start: "A representative heard that I was good with my hands and asked if I could make a cornshuck flower. I worked for days to make a rose, finally came up with what I thought was a satisfactory one, and then moved on to other things. I usually have something new for each fair I attend."

Willard Watson is another familiar face on the crafts circuit. In his workshop on Wildcat Road east of Boone, he creates numerous items in wood, specializing in folk toys such as dancing dolls, farm animals and farm equipment, slingshots, dollcradles, and the like.

Like most of the Watauga County Watsons, Willard can plunk out a tune on a banjo or shuffle into a flatfoot dance at the sound of a guitar. He was a sensation several years ago at a national festival in Washington when he danced on the Smithsonian Mall to the music of the Preservation Hall Jazz Band.

At the Appalachian Christmas Festival, he divided his time between praising his wife's quilts, demonstrating his toys, and dancing to the guitar, banjo, and fiddle music of Arnold, Arlie, and Ora Watson. Coeds vied for the chance to get on the dance floor with him.

Finally there were the Presnells, master craftsmen in wood. In between sales, Mrs. Ed Presnell played one of Ed's famous dulcimers while son Baxter and wife displayed birds, dishes, bowls and other items created by this famous mountain family. Ed—he of the long, black beard—was at home attempting to catch up on back orders for dulcimers.

Interest in the work of these and other craftsmen was keen throughout the fair, causing one to wonder why such people are not employed more frequently in the education process. Perhaps we will eventually see the value of regularly bringing such craftsmen into our public schools as teachers who can show firsthand what life was like in the past.



The Mountaineer and the Media

January 30, 1974

Recently while doing a minor bit of commentary for Bill Ballard's *Carolina Camera*, [WBTV, Charlotte] I was struck by the fact that through columnist and cameraman, the Appalachian mountaineer has turned into a public figure, and his habitat has become as familiar as Matt Dillon's Dodge City.

Our location at the time—the old Mast Store in Valle Crucis, North Carolina—is a case in point. This sprawling, weatherbeaten store, which has served the Valley people since before the turn of the century, has been the setting for movie-making, TV filming, feature photography, and reams of journalistic copy.

In addition, members of the Mast family who owned and operated the store until a few months ago, have become media neighbors to thousands of people who have never made their way into the Valley, let alone met the Masts on a face-to-face basis.

Even customers in the store have become veteran actors, as they pass before the camera to purchase their groceries, examine farm equipment, call for their mail, or pass the time of day around the gigantic centrally located stove.

Ballard grinned and gave assent to my original observation: "A couple of weeks ago I thought I had really come up with a find—a man who raises wild boars in another section of the mountains. When I got

him in front of the camera, he was a natural—no evidence of tension or stagefright. When I complimented him on how well the filming went he grinned and said, 'Well, I've had a little practice—you're the second bunch of camera boys who've come by this week.' "

Another prime example in the Boone area is Willard Watson, of Wild Cat Road, whose black slouch hat and full mustache are known from coast to coast, courtesy of Columbia Broadcasting System and *Charles Kuralt on the Road*. His southern exposure has also been advanced by *Carolina Camera* and numerous feature writers and columnists. His workshop is a Mecca for both the craft-minded and the curious, and his folk toys find a market throughout the fifty states.

Then there's Doc Watson, the folk and country music man, who was "discovered" by the Smithsonian folk curator, Ralph Rinzler, in the early '60's and whose face may now be seen on almost two score albums in music stores all over America. In addition, his tours have taken him both stateside and abroad, and his network TV appearances have made him known to millions of viewers.

Finally there is Jack Guy, whose pioneer work in the areas of folk toys and folk music has caused ballad hunters, historians, folklorists, musicologists, and tourists to seek out his Beech Mountain shop for mountain crafts and consultation.

To the credit of all these and other mountain representatives unmentioned, public focus has left them relatively unchanged. They still judge others by what they are rather than what they appear to be and they apply the same principle to themselves. Thus they continue to be natural and unassuming under varying circumstances, and they favor no man above another, regardless of his position in life.

Willard Watson summed it up rather well for me recently in these words: "There's folks from all over who come to visit me. Some of them have got more money than they can count and some of them ain't got much besides holes in their overall pockets. High or low they get the same treatment from me. If they're decent folks they can sit at my table. If they ain't they don't get invited!"

Mountain Sayings

February 27, 1974

It has often been said in recent years that with the influence of radio, TV, movies, newspapers, consolidated schools, and tourists, the language of the mountaineer has been transformed.

One tends to accept such statements at face value, attributing them to experts who are supposed to know. But an attentive listener may decide that *transformed* is a very strong word—that mountain speech is alive and pungent, even in the mouths of some of those persons who have purportedly effected the changes.

At a recent meeting in Crossnore, North Carolina, with a group of individuals involved in the educational process, I was struck by the number of folk expressions which flowed naturally in the speech of the participants.

One member, a trifle confused as to the meaning of another's statement, asked for enlightenment in the following way: "You're going to have to lick that calf again." The first speaker, in humorous exchange, replied: "I don't chew my tobacco twice."

Still another member of the group was reporting on the authoritative nature of a community resident: "That man can give you an eye-witness account of things that happened before he was born!" And later on in regard to a talkative woman of his acquaintance: "Her lungs are so strong that she can talk thirty minutes under water."

Friend Edwin Judkins, of Bristol, Virginia, sends along a list of what he calls *country sayings* which also testify to the fact that folk sayings are still regularly employed. His letter included a note of explanation:

"Country sayings are not to be taken literally, but they illustrate in an abstract way the thing you are talking about. You have to furnish your own definitions to fit the occasion. The following are some examples:

- There is no use to have a dog and bark yourself.
- Dress up a dog and his tail will stick out.
- You cannot lie down with a dog without getting fleas on you.
- Even in a dog fight a person has his druthers. (Rathers.)
- Solomon's dog never bit him. (Referring to a dumb person.)
- That is a horse of another color.
- He is trying to ride a high horse when he couldn't ride a calf.
- A short horse is easily curried.
- Long horn cattle come from a distance.
- What is good for the goose is good for the gander.

He drove his ducks to a poor market.
The silent sow drinks the slop.
What goes over the devil's back will always come back under his belly.
A self brag is a half scoundrel.
The bottom rail has got ten on top.
He has a hard row of stumps to hoe this time.
A new broom sweeps clean, but the old one knows where the dirt is.
A is all right but B is an older hand at the bellows.
He planted his corn before he built his fence.
A person that jumps into a thorn bush can't tell which thorn scratched him.
The higher a monkey climbs the more of his tail shows.
They got along together as well as the works of a Waterbury watch.
Hew to the line; let the chips fall where they may.
Fouled solid means struck tight.
The going of it means disappeared.
Fungled up means frustrated.
Bridled up means showing anger."

Snakes and Witches

September 3, 1974

As indicated previously in this column, material sent in by readers is usually handled on a first-come, first-used basis. Occasionally, however, an item will either get misplaced or be held in reserve until it ties in with a specific topic. I confess that the following letter from E. E. Judkins, of Bristol, Tennessee, simply got lost in the shuffle. Fortunately it turned up in time to join the numerous previous comments on snakes and their ways.

Mr. Judkins writes: "As you are on the subject of snakes, I will tell you some true snake stories. A few years ago I was walking along the bank of the Holston River. Upon looking across to the opposite bank, I saw a commotion in a small-sized bush, and I was wondering what was going on.

"The water was very low at that time of year, about ankle deep. I slipped off my shoes and waded across, and I saw a large black snake, with its head down, hanging in this bush, and a big wharf rat running up and down this snake and biting it.

"When I walked closer, the rat stood up on its hind feet and looked at me in defiance. I was really bluffed. I stopped and went to pulling on my shoes, getting ready to kick, and the rat dropped and scurried away. I secured a stick and punched the snake, but it was dead, evidently killed by the rat.

"A large rattlesnake was killed on the mountain above the town of North Holston and brought down to the highway. It had a large pouch or swelling about half way down its body. A man took a hoe and cut it in two, and there was a full grown gray squirrel which looked like it had just been swallowed."

Good to hear again from another Bristol resident, Mr. King Sturgill, Jr., of 304 Lynfield Road. He brings up the subject of witches, once a familiar topic in the Appalachians but one about which I seldom receive information. This seems rather strange in view of the presence of numerous devil cults throughout the country. Perhaps Satan and his minions have simply left the mountains for the lowlands and the cities!

Mr. Sturgill's letter reads: "Sometime ago I promised you that I would tell you of some things my Aunt Mary told me when I was living with her back in the early 1920's.

"I was just a small boy, but I can remember very well. She told me that when she was a little girl, an old lady they called a witch would visit her home real often. She said this old lady was at her home and got sick and that her dad got on horseback and rode for miles to a witch doctor.

"The doctor gave him a blank white sheet of paper and told him to take it down to the spring and tack it on a walnut tree. He said to put one nail in each corner and each day to go back and tap each lightly.

"Well, it so happened that when he first put it up he mashed his finger and got mad and drove all the nails up. When he got back to the house, the old witch was dead. I'll write again soon."

Witches are usually those who are just enough different from their neighbor in dress and actions to draw the attention of the curious. Someone applies the name, the word "gets out," and the victim is labeled for life. Carolina papers recently carried the story of Winnie Watson, a 79-year-old woman from eastern North Carolina who has been tormented for years by children and childish adults. Not only has she been called "witch," but she has been stoned and her house burned down. Neighbors have banded together to protect her.

John West, poet and novelist at Appalachian State University, tells the story of a female relative, Tennessee Bumgarner, who lived near Wilkesboro, North Carolina, and was called a witch by area residents. When she was buried, according to West, grass refused to grow on her grave for a period of thirty years. In recent years, he says, the grave has caved in and grass has now sprouted. At Bumgarner family reunions the children enjoy a scare by approaching and playing around the grave.

Some "witches," of course, have enjoyed their roles and played them to the hilt, reveling in the notoriety achieved.

Cider-Making in Boone

October 17, 1974

Joe Minor, a resident of Boone, is a printer—a good one—by trade and a cider-maker by druthers. At this season he finds it much easier to concentrate on cidering than on printing. Fall and the ripening of mountain apples cause his blood to tingle and his hand to itch for the wheel of his 100-year-old cider press. He catches himself gazing vacant-eyed out his office window or refocusing his blurred vision over a layout sheet that keeps moving from rectangle to the oval shape of an apple.

He claims it's a contagious disease, for a goodly number of his friends have it, too. He offers evidence in the fact that for over 15 years they have been fellow victims of this fall malady. Innocent passersby and sometimes utter strangers also fall prey as they gaze on the physical manifestations of the illness and are drawn irresistibly into one of its varied phases—the washing, the spilling of apples into the hopper, tightening the press wheel to start the flow of juice, straining the sweet liquid into stone crocks, and emptying slatted barrels of pulp and peel into garden plots as organic fertilizer.

This fall the disease has been especially contagious. On a typical weekend a friend will drive by the Minor residence with a car trunk filled with orchard “drops” to see whether the press is in operation; a church group will bring in a donated tree harvest on a money-making project; a high school club will gather culls to provide sweet cider at the fall dance.

All are welcome. They simply do their share of the operation and leave a small portion of the squeezings as pay, which, often as not, is later divided by the generous Minor with friends, neighbors, and other kibitzers.

Last weekend, for instance, a university home economics club “just couldn't manage a reception without real homemade cider—we'll bring the apples on Saturday.”

They did, indeed, but Joe grinned as he viewed the misshapen assortment of Starks, Winesaps, and Rome Beauties gathered from an orchard unsprayed and unpruned for the last five years. “All I can say from the looks of what you've picked is that the worms are gonna have to look after themselves!”

Stations were soon assigned and the cidering began. By the time the first bushel of apples had clattered into the hopper and the first gallon of juice had been pressed, a curious group of onlookers had formed. Soon they were joined by several “cider nuts,” Joe's appellation for the

long-term victims of the apple cider bug. "They've got the cider disease. Some of them have been coming by each fall for a dozen years, and they can't wait to black up their hands with apple juice!"

Joe Houser, another Boone native and one of the designated "nuts," laughed at the remark: "Sure, I'm a cider nut. This must be at least my fifteenth year of cider-making with Joe. And, frankly, it's not really the cider I'm after—it's the making!"

He turned, opened the trunk of his car and revealed the red cargo within: "Hey, Joe, these won't even have to be washed—I picked them in a Grade A pasture!" A moment later he had taken over the press wheel, his eyes lighting up like those of a kid with a new 10-speed bike.

All afternoon and into the evening the cider-making continued until the supply of apples was exhausted. Then, and only then, did the "nuts" and the "near-nuts" turn reluctantly homeward with a farewell, "See you next weekend, Joe."

They will, too, and so will I. My hands are black from apple juice. I've come down with a case of the cider disease!

More Witches and Snakes

October 23, 1974

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A number of witchcraft items have come our way in recent weeks, some having to do with methods of turning into a witch, others noting ways of escaping their power.

Mrs. Nettie Price, of near Shouns, Tennessee, says the secret of turning into a witch is knowing the proper recipe for witches ointment. "Once you find out how to make the proper grease from the bodies of the dead, you just rub it on you and you turn into anything you want to—witch, bird, or beast."

Another device offered by Mrs. Sarah Shelton, of Shelby, North Carolina, has to do with drawing a circle on the ground, holding one foot by one hand, placing the other hand on top of the head and saying, "Devil take me—I am yours."

I recall one which I firmly believed in my childhood: say the Lord's Prayer backwards and you become a child of Satan!

How do you keep witches away? With salt, brooms, horseshoes and sundry other good luck devices, according to readers. The most imaginative procedure, however, came from Mrs. Denice Brewer, who

lives near Marion, North Carolina: "Doing just one thing, like throwing salt over your shoulder or putting a broom by the door, won't keep a witch away. The best way to be safe from a witch is to first sprinkle salt on the front doorsteps, bury a bottle under them, and then put a fork under your pillow. To be extra sure, wear your stockings wrong side out."

Still another snake story from Edwin Judkins, of Bristol, Virginia: "This snake story was told to me by an elderly friend about the turn of the century. He said that during the Civil War he was scouting in the woods to keep from being inducted into the army. Therefore he had plenty of time on his hands. He watched a rattlesnake lying on a log charm a wild turkey. The turkey was drawn irresistibly to the snake in ever smaller circles. However, the charm was broken by a hunting dog which appeared on the scene, and he was unable to tell the outcome."

The Tale of Sugar Mountain

January 8, 1975

There is a tendency to think of folklore as something only of the distant past, preserved through generations by way of custom and tradition. Actually it is still being created every day by the circulation of stories, songs, sayings, and other materials by specific groups of people.

Some of the contemporary folklore is just as fascinating as that of the past. A case in point is a story heard in a number of versions in recent months about how Sugar Mountain, now the site of a southern Appalachian ski resort, got its name.

Supposedly the legend grew out of continued questions by flatland skiers about the origin of the name: "Did the mountain people tap maple trees on the slopes for sugar? Was it because sunlight on the mountain top made the snow look like sugar?"

Employees, faced with such questions on a day-to-day basis, eventually came up with a tongue-in-cheek response that might vary with the storyteller.

"Oh, no, Ma'am, that's not how the name came about. Fact is it comes from what was once the finest sugar mine in these mountains. See that cleared section up the mountainside where the ski lift operates? Well, that used to be the route of a narrow gauge track that went clear to the top of the mountain where the mine was located.

"Several times a week they'd run what they called the sugar cart up to the mine, fill it up, and then run it back down the mountain. People

knew what days it operated, and they'd come from miles around with their pokes and buckets to pick up their sweetnin'—saved them the trouble of boiling down maple syrup or making sorgham.

"Course, after a time the sugar was mostly mined out, and they closed the shaft when the country stores began to lay in supplies of the commercial stuff. But before the trees and underbush could grow up over the tracks, the ski people came in and started installing that lift you see operating. Next time you go to the top ask the lift attendant up there where the mouth to the sugar mine is. Who knows—price of sugar being what it is and us with these mild winters of late, they may give some thought to startin' up that sugar cart again!"

Oxen on the Farm

January 15, 1975

During my early years in the foothills of western North Carolina it was not uncommon to see huge oxen serving as work animals for plowing and other farming chores.

A recent manuscript describing the use of these patient, plodding beasts reminds me that it has been several years since I have even seen such an animal and then in some sort of pioneer-day parade.

Thus it gave me a great deal of pleasure to read an account of their early use by Henry Mason, a pioneer farmer of Macon County. He speaks as an authority:

"Sturdy oxen were used to pull the plows, wagons, sleds, and to snake logs. A few valley farms utilized horses and mules, but the settlers who farmed the rough mountain sides depended almost entirely upon the oxen as a beast of burden.

"The mountain settlers would name their oxen such names as Sam, Loag, Bill, and Charlie.

"The oxen were carefully trained to respond to certain commands. A line was tied around the base of their horns and used as a signaling device, by the driver, as an aid in giving commands.

"For instance, in order to command an oxen to go right, the driver would jerk slightly on the line simultaneously calling out *Ghee*. To go left, the driver would pull steadily on the line while calling out *Haw*. To stop, the command was *Woooo*.

"Some professional bull drivers took great pride in their ability to handle or drive a yoke or yokes of oxen. Many drivers would not use lines, only a large black leather bull whip with a *cracker* attached to

the tip. The cracker consisted of a small braided piece of grass rope about three-sixteenths of an inch in diameter. It was this cracker that was mainly responsible for the loud noise when the whip was in use.

"The driver would *yoke up* one or two yokes of oxen, fasten them to a large log by means of a log chain. Sometimes grabs were utilized. Grabs were iron or steel hooks that could be driven into the sides of logs by means of a wooden *maul* or mallet. The chain was then attached to the grabs and the driver would begin giving verbal commands to the oxen. The great black bull whip would then become active, swirling and slithering around the oxen, feeling for tender spots such as their underbellies. The oxen would slowly take up the slack in the chains. They would ease their enormous shoulders against the yoke, each ox applying his fair share of pressure. If the load was especially heavy, the oxen would almost touch the ground with their bellies, their great muscles bulging from their bodies.

"Many of the settlers had formulated a theory that a man's true temperament would most easily be revealed while plowing with untrained oxen in a new-ground. The scooter plow was hard to keep in the ground under normal conditions but the stumps, rocks, and hidden roots of a steep hill-side new ground were a constant source of exasperation to the mountain farmer. Sometimes a mountain farmer could hear his neighbor plowing or *breaking up* a new-ground. What he heard might sound somewhat similar to the following: 'Gat up thar Sam, Hawwww WooHawwwwwwww...Come in thar boy, Geeeeee...WoooGeeeeeee, damit ta ell, Geeeeeeeeeeeeeee. Mawwwwww, fetch me that ole claw-hammer off tha fire shelf, this dad-blasted ole steer's busted up my plow and hits tha only one I had,' and so it went."

Bloodybones—and a Skunk Recipe

February 18, 1975

Recent responses to *Folk-Ways* have listed the names of various unnatural creatures who have haunted the Appalachians and brought fear into the hearts of mountain children—Booger Man, Scratch, Old Tash, Rawhead and Bloodybones, to mention a few.

In the following letter Mrs. London Yelton, of Bakersville, North Carolina, recalls a real-life Bloodybones who provided his own special brand of terror.

"In the January 30th edition of *Folk-Ways and Folk-Speech* I read Mr. Bateman's letter, and it brought back a lot of memories. We had been told about Old Raw-head and Bloody-bones. But after we heard about the old Cow-doctor and his bloody sock, Old Raw-head and Bloody-bones faded into insignificance.

"The word *veterinarian* was never used when I was growing up. We had one local cow-doctor and he made his rounds through each community, de-horning and doctoring cattle. I was small the first time I saw him. Paw told us to keep a look-out for him. This was the day he was expected in 'The Flats,' as our community was called then.

"Our barn set on one side of the road, and our house set on the other side. We children went and set down beside our old log barn on some big rocks and watched for him. I didn't quite understand what de-horning was all about. Paw had said simply that he was going to have our old cow's horns took off.

"Finally we saw the cow-doctor coming up the road on his old white mare. We had been told a lot about Uncle Nate Garland—just the mention of his name was enough to send chills down a person's spine.

"They got a rope around the old cow and threw her to the ground. Then the cow-doctor got a wicked-looking old saw and began sawing away at her horns. Our old cow rolled her eyes around in her head and let out a pitiful bawl. That and the sight of blood was enough for me. I took off as hard as I could and didn't stop until I was way back of our house where I couldn't see or hear what was going on.

"But my brother stood his ground. He stayed until they got through with the old cow and let her go. But he got a scare that day that lasted until he was a grown man. All anyone had to do was mention Nate Garland's name. Paw and Maw laughed a lot about it later. When Uncle Nat got through with the cow he wiped his hands on a bloody rag. While he was doing this he was looking straight at my brother. 'Have you been a good boy, son?' he asked. 'If you ain't, I've got a old bloody sock I stick mean boys in. Why, I even make special rounds just catching all the mean younguns and poking them in my old bloody sock. I carry them off and they are never heard from again.'

"My brother had been brave enough to watch the de-horning, but now his nerve failed him. The sight of the bloody paw and Nate's bloody hands were too much for him. He almost had a fit right then and there.

"Sometimes Maw would have to go somewhere and she would leave our oldest sister in charge of us smaller children. All she had to do to get us to mind her was to threaten putting us in the old cellar beneath our house, which was a terror in itself, all dark and spooky. She told us that Nate Garland was in there with his old bloody sock, just waiting for us. You can imagine how very little trouble she had out of us after that.

"I have a lot more tales if you are interested, among them the tale of a ghost bull that roams the Roan Mountain."

As promised in last week's edition of *Folk-Ways*, the "hard times" recipe for broiled skunk follows. It was provided by Adam Miller, who lives near Asheville. He notes that skunk meat is white and tender but that the animal must be killed by fall trap or other device that will prevent the release of his special brand of perfume (scent glands also must be removed before broiling process starts).

Broiled Skunk

Skin and clean skunk, then parboil in salted water for 15 or 20 minutes. Pour off water and add fresh water. Steam for an hour and then rub meat with salt, pepper, butter, and desired spices. Ready to eat after about 40 minutes of broiling and occasional basting with butter.

Depression Recipes

March 5, 1975

Recently this columnist sent out a call for depression recipes—pore folks fare of the '30's. A number of items have found their way to *Folk-Ways*, sometimes accompanied by stories of their creation and use. One such combination from Mrs. London Yelton, of Bakersville, North Carolina, relates the preparation of a special "hard times stew" and the consequences of eating it.

"I don't have the recipe for this hard times stew, but I heard this story several years ago and thought I would pass it on.

"This man said that back during the depression years his family always saved their best food for Sunday dinner. Well, there was this old loafer who came every Sunday and stayed all day long. This man said he wasn't stingy, but the old loafer wouldn't work a lick—he just came to get something extra to eat.

"One week his wife kept fretting about not having any meat to fix for Sunday dinner. 'I wouldn't mind not having any meat to fix if it wasn't for that old loafer,' she said. 'If I don't have any meat he will go around and tell the neighbors we are facing starvation.'

"Right then and there her husband decided she would have some meat on the table if it was the last thing he ever did. He told his wife to take her good, easy time and not serve dinner at the usual time. Well, the old loafer almost starved before she called him to the table. He would jump up every few minutes and stretch his neck toward the kitchen and sniff like a hound dog.

“Finally he got his feet under the table and was so busy raking and eating with both hands that he didn’t notice the others hadn’t touched the stew she had prepared. When he finally pushed back his place with a sigh of satisfaction, he owned that ‘that was the best stew I’ve every tasted in my life. What was it anyway?’

“The husband looked him straight in the eye and said, ‘You remember them two big tom cats that was playin’ around the house last Sunday? Well, you just et one of them.’

“The old loafer sat there for a few seconds with the strangest look on his face, then jumped up and ran out of the door, almost bent double. Finally he straightened up and went humping out across the field. Then he stopped, shook his fist at them and said, ‘If any of you ever tell this on me I’ll kill you!’

“The family stood and watched him go on across the field, retching and heaving like an old cat with bread hung in its mouth. Since that time the husband has recommended this stew to cure the loafering fever.”

The Ghost Bull of Roan Mountain

March 19, 1975

Southern Appalachia has always had its share of ghost stories and legends, and many collections attest to this fact. Most of them are concerned with “revenants,” or “returners,” those who return temporarily from the world of the dead. Sometimes the returners are animals rather than human beings. Occasionally they appear to torment the living, but more often simply provide momentary fright and additional material for yarn-spinning.

What apparently is an old story but a new one to *Folk-Ways* came to us recently from Mrs. London Yelton, who lives near Bakersville and knows well the setting of the story. It is of the animal variety and she calls it “The Ghost Bull That Haunts Roan Mountain.”

Back in the old days, according to her story, horses roamed free all summer on Roan Mountain, and small herds of cattle grazed on the fall grass. Men drove their cattle up there in the spring, and every cattle owner had his own special mark. They gapped their animals’ ears, and these gaps were as individual as a branding iron. They would make several trips during the summer to salt them, and mark the new-born calves.

There was one wealthy cattle man who owned a lot of land, but he drove a larger herd up there every summer than any one else. People began to grumble about this; they said he was going to over-graze the Roan, and the other cattle would starve. This man owned a magnificent lead-bull who was absolute ruler of the Roan during the summer.

People were afraid of him because he would kill or cripple any other bull that dared to challenge his authority. This went on for several years. People resented it more each year. Some of the men warned his owner to keep him off the Roan. When spring came again, this man started driving a larger herd than ever before up the mountain slopes. The lead-bull walked in front, and the other cattle followed the sound of his bell. The sound would carry on the wind, and could be heard for miles. They reached the top of the mountain, and stopped to rest; then a shot rang out from among the balsams, and the magnificent lead-bull fell to his knees there in the tall grass—never to rise again. The fog and the mist closed in around them. The person who had fired the shot slipped away without a trace.

The old timers say the bull never left the Roan Mountain; and on dark, gloomy days, when the fog hangs low on the mountain, the whisper of grazing cattle can be heard around the spot where the old hotel use to stand, and the lonely toll of the lead-bull's bell can still be heard as he leads his ghost herd over the rolling slopes of Roan Mountain.

Material on madstones, or hairballs, continues to come our way, and we plan to do a round-up column on this subject in the near future. Meantime the material is being forwarded to Dr. Joe Clark, of Raleigh, who expects not only to use it in a folklore publication but to divert certain items to Dr. Wayland Hand, who is preparing a definitive work on folk medicine. Both Clark and Hand are remembered as pioneer contributors to the Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina folklore.

Growing up in Crossnore—and a Wild Game Recipe

April 9, 1975

Most of the letters written to *Folk-Ways* since the column came into existence over two years ago have been directed toward specific topics—remedies, tales, songs, superstitions, speech, and the various additional elements that make up what we call folklore.

Occasionally, however, there are simply letters of reminiscence—of family life, work, hunting, trapping, yarning, cooking, and various other activities which once served to hold a mountain family together.

Such a letter came this week from Mrs. Berta Cuthbertson Wiseman of Spruce Pine. Of particular interest are her comments on the early history of “galacking” and other plant-gathering in the Appalachians.

“I was born and raised at Crossnore, N.C. My father worked in the Cranberry mines, but also farmed and trapped. He received 75¢ a day and was one of the boss men. The common laborers received 50¢ a day.

“There came a man from New York to the mines and my father, being a great outdoors man, showed him the nice plants, lady slippers and galax. So he wanted someone to gather plants and ship them to him.

“Since my father was a farmer and trapper he took him to Mr. Ed Robins. This man thought galax were the prettiest things there were. Mr. Robins told him they had pretty blossoms in summer. He couldn’t believe it and told Mr. Robins if he showed him a galax bloom he would give him a new car. We only had rough dirt roads and most of the folks had not seen a car. Mr. Robins and my father showed him the bloom.

“Mr. Robins got the car and Mr. Robins gave my father (his name was Leeander Cuthbertson) a job collecting plants at \$5.00 per day. He went from 75¢ a day to \$5.00. He got to go to the mountains which he loved so dearly. Mr. Robins got him 3 to 5 men to help. They camped out from 1 week to 2 weeks at a time, but he still kept up his farming and hunting and trapping. My father, Lee Cuthbertson, as he was called for short, would get up and walk all the way in one day down the Linville Falls, follow the river to the end all through the Gorge, come back home that night with all the hides skinned out he could carry (and he could carry a load), tan the hides and pull galax after shrubbery gathering time and farming.

“Just about Christmas he took a team and wagon load of furs and galax to Morganton and exchanged for coffee, sugar and bolts of cloth and shoes. This is when Santa Claus began to bring us children more things at Christmas.

“There were 11 children in our family; one died when born. We all worked hard and had a fine and good home life. We all made music. We had an organ; any of us played the organ; all sang. Then we picked up our string music: fiddle, guitar, banjo, harmonica, Jew’s harp, accordion and had a big time. All of us danced. That was such a good home life. I wish everybody could know how nice it was nowadays.

“My father was the first man to dig plants to ship or sell which has grown over the years. This is the best money crop in Avery county, which was then part of Mitchell county.”

Mrs. Wiseman also sends a suggestion about improving the taste of wild game through the use of spice wood:

"Gather spice wood when the sap first comes up, store away to dry. It makes good tea, but if you have any kind of wild meats, just break up some of the spice wood and wash clean, power boil [parboil] with your wild meat. Take out the meat, eat as is with some salt and pepper or roll in flour and meal and fry. Every one says this is the best, most delicious meat they ever ate."

A Ginseng Perfume?

May 7, 1975

Several years ago when the "natural odor" began to invade the cologne and body oil world, I approached a druggist friend with the idea of getting in on the market with a perfume concoction featuring ginseng.

It seemed very logical at the time. Throughout its history ginseng has been surrounded by an aura of superstition and mystery, much of it concerned with the plant's supposed powers in promoting sexual vigor in the male. In addition, it has generally been credited with health-giving properties and a mild, pleasant aroma.

The druggist was intrigued by the idea and immediately began an investigation of manufacturing and marketing problems. He wound up by shaking his head in disappointment. "It's a good idea, and I think we could come up with a product that would sell. Trouble is we just don't have the capital to produce and promote it. It would take a large organization whose products are already known."

Recently the "large organization" surfaced with ginseng products for both male and female, and "sang" dealers throughout the world must still be open-mouthed at the advertising blurbs, extravagant even for Madison Avenue.

The male product is a "lusty invigorating scent" in a "potent, masculine aftershave so stimulating, so provocative you can bet your Dynasty on it." Directions call for the user to "splash this vibrant lotion on your face, neck or chest, and you'll experience a wave of warmth and desire."

The cologne for women is identified with "the wonder-herb of the Orient, perhaps man's oldest aphrodisiac. Just one spray and your senses will be stirred...because you'll experience a wave of pleasant warmth, invigoration, and desire."

First reaction: Lord, I hope I'm not in tight quarters when both a male and female anointed with these scents meet face to face. They'll wind up in worse shape than the couple who still aren't allowed to eat in Howard Johnson's!

A word of warning to the adventuresome, male or female: if you are driven to try this potent perfume, go lightly on the first application. In strong doses the reek is somewhere between Lydia Pinkham's Tonic and Black Flag insecticide.

Also a word of optimism for you diggers of ginseng: with prices hovering at \$50 to \$55 per pound, hold on to that sang. If these products make it on the market, you may be digging solid gold roots!

Marbles Games in the Mountains

May 14, 1975

Whatever happened to marble-playing? Ask the average adult this question and he'll look startled, scratch his head, and finally come out with, "Lord, don't ask me. I'll bet it's been fifteen or twenty years since I've seen anyone playing!"

And then: "I remember, though, when I was in grammar school we used to knuckle down at recess, lunch, or after school and play for keeps if a teacher wasn't around—or for fair if she was."

Benny Yates, a Boone native, recalls that in his youth every boy in his school had a small poke in which he carried a wide assortment of marbles suitable for any contest. "Pedabs, of course, were the most common. They were small, clay marbles that weren't worth much. The ones we really prized were glassies or steelies from which we chose our toys (taws) or shooters. I can remember spending whole afternoons bustin' up the hubs of car wheels to get the ball bearings out. You could trade one of the bearings as a sticker and get at least 15 glassies in exchange."

The favorite mountain version of marbles, according to Yates, was a circle game which involved drawing a ring on the ground and having all participants (usually no more than two or three) place an agreed number of marbles in the center of the ring.

The player then tossed at a lag line to determine the first shooter. The winner's first shot (from the edge of the circle) scattered the bunched marbles and the game was on. If the shooter had knocked any of the marbles from the ring, he continued to shoot until he missed. Then the next shooter took over.

"A good shooter," says Yates, "would start with an edger (a marble near the edge of the ring) and work his way around the ring, using the same kind of English that a pool player uses to manipulate his taw. An expert could sometimes clean the ring at the first go-round. A real daddy rabbit might walk off with everybody's marbles before the day was over."

Unlike flatland children, mountain youngsters played marbles throughout the year, according to Yates. It all depended on the weather.

"On rainy days when I went to school at Valle Crucis, we went inside, drew a chalk circle on the floor, and played the same as outside. The only rub was that when I went home after school, the knees of my overalls were soaked black from floor oil. You talk about the faded denim clothes kids wear today—Lord, you should have seen my overalls when my mother got through bleaching them in strong lye soap. They'd put today's clothes to shame!"

Yates also noted another hazard of marble-playing, sore, bloody knuckles. "You were supposed to knuckle down when you shot, and in cold weather it didn't take much to start your knuckles bleeding, especially if you fudged a little (slid your hand forward) to get more force on the break. Fudging was, of course, illegal, but a lot of shooters got away with it."

Yates admits to having heard of other marble games played in the mountains—chase, holey, potsy—but says he played only the circle variety.

Why has the game of marbles died out? Obviously it has been replaced by TV and a variety of other activities, but one wonders to what extent the loss is due to paved streets, sidewalks, and parking lots, plus the fact that the dirt yard and playground have been covered with grass, providing an impossible surface for the game.

Folk Doctors and a Coon-Dog Tale

June 11, 1975

A recent letter on folk medicine and "mountain doctoring" from Mrs. George Sensabaugh of Church Hill, Tennessee, brought a response from Mrs. Dianne Dale of Burnsville, North Carolina.

Mrs. Dale indicates that medical practitioners included herb doctors, midwives, and blood doctors. "Most of them," she says, "didn't attend medical school. The herb doctors made medicine to kill pain

from poppies. Hops were used as a remedy for wakefulness, worm medicine was made from the Old Jerusalem Plant, queens root was used for the common cold, and tonics were made from wild cherry bark."

But the midwife, according to Mrs. Dale, was the medical person most frequently relied on. "She was the most indispensable woman in the community. To induce a quick delivery, she held powdered tobacco leaves under the patient's nose to make her sneeze. This was called snuffing. Sometimes she put an axe under the patient's bed to cut the pains. She hardly ever was paid with money, but usually received chicken or pork in exchange for her services."

Blood doctors, she says, were in a special category and were also usually women. They relied heavily on the Scriptures for a cure. "To stop bleeding," says Mrs. Dale, "the blood doctor would read to the patient the sixth verse of the sixteenth chapter of Ezekiel. ('And when I passed by you, and saw you weltering in your blood, I said, 'Live, and grow up like a plant in the field.' ") Strangely enough, the bleeding usually stopped. If this didn't work, spider webs and soot could be applied to the cut place."

Some time ago *Folk-Ways* carried a story about a chowhound who discovered that an overly-abused family had fed him broiled tom cat. Apparently an unidentified reader felt that dogs deserve equal treatment. At any rate the following tale came to us last week.

"There was a restaurant manager who made a deal with an old hunter to furnish him a coon once a week for his special customers.

"For the first few weeks the hunter was lucky—he had no trouble fetching in a fat coon each week and claiming his pay. But along about the sixth week he ran into trouble: even though he went out night after night he wasn't able to come up with a coon, not even with the help of Fido, his favorite coon dog.

"Finally, in desperation, he first apologized to Fido, then killed, dressed, and delivered him as fresh coon to the restaurant manager. A few days later he stopped by the restaurant for the blue plate special, never stopping to examine the portion of meat. He did, however, find it tough and complained to the manager.

" 'Why, I thought that would be just to your liking,' was the reply. 'That's some of that coon you brought in this week that I've been saving for you.' "

"The old hunter grew pale, grabbed his stomach, and staggered toward the door. 'Fido,' he groaned, 'you've always been faithful to answer my call—don't fail me now! ' "

Folk Medicine

August 27, 1975

If memory serves correctly, the subject of madstones has been laid to rest several times in this column. But apparently the fear of mad dog bites and other poisonous wounds was so deeply ingrained into minds of people of my generation and before that stories of the magical healing stone still abound.

And they continue to find their way to *Folk-Ways*. One of the more graphic accounts in recent months comes from Mr. C.C. Dalton, a 90-year-old gentleman from Vale, N.C.

"I will tell you a true story about a madstone that happened about May 8th, 1895. I was about 10 years old and I am 90 now. It is a long story but I don't know any other way to do it.

"Our house and John Smith's house were about 125 yards apart. On a Sunday morning Mrs. Smith called about 8:15 and said for my Dad to come up there and help her get John in the house. He had gone out behind the smokehouse, vomited and fainted.

"We brought him in the house and had him sitting up in bed when he went into a hard fit. They got the local doctor up there that evening and he said John had hydrophobia. He called four other doctors in Charlotte which was about 25 miles away. Away they came in a 2-horse buggy and they agreed with Dr. Goode who was very young.

"My grandmother had lived in Rutherford County. She had a neighbor who had a madstone. The doctors said it wasn't worth anything, but they would give it a try so they sent after Adam Yelton and his madstone that was 33 miles away.

"Mr. Yelton came on Wednesday night. First he bathed the madstone in milk and then shaved John's leg. Then he bound the madstone to the bite where it stuck tight for 13 hours. After he had bathed the stone in milk again, he put it back on the bite for another 3½ hours. After a couple of hours Mr. Smith quit talking out of his head and went to sleep for the first time in four days and three nights.

"I think he slept about 30 hours and he couldn't eat a bite when he woke up, just drink sweetened whisky or brandy. He was awfully weak for a long time, but he got well and went back after a year to laying brick. He built several brick buildings still standing on S. Lafayette Street in Shelby, N.C."

A letter from Mr. James W. Harr of Blountville, Tennessee, also concerns itself with folk medicine. Of special interest are his experiences as a designated healer by virtue of the circumstances of his birth. He writes:

"I am one of those who was born after my father died and have blown in hundreds of children's mouths for the thrash and never had a complaint. Even the local M.D. used to send parents with a child to me, telling them I could do more for them than he could."

Mr. Harr also records several home remedies traditionally employed by his grandmother.

"I am 68 and have been completely orphaned since I was 10, but I can remember my grandmother had a lot of home remedies she used on my brother and me. My brother was often poisoned by poison ivy and my grandmother would have me get some cedar brush (green). Then she would smoulder it on some hot coals and have my brother hold the affected parts over the smoke. This would dry the blisters and get rid of the itching. She also believed in sassafras tea to cure spring fever. Unfortunately she never left me a remedy to cure baldness and I could use one at my age!"

Perhaps other readers could furnish *Folk-Ways* and Mr. Harr with a guaranteed time-tested remedy. Please send all material to: Rogers Whitener, *Folk-Ways and Folk-Speech*, Box 376, Boone, N.C. 28608.

More Folk Medicine

September 17, 1975

The area of folk remedies continues to be of interest to readers of *Folk-Ways*, leading one to believe that many of these remedies may still be employed rather than merely remembered as "endurances" of early years.

A letter from Mrs. Mollie Click of Kingsport, Tennessee, gives a hint of this although most readers will agree with her "terrible!" assessment of others, including Balm of Gilead buds, still sold on the herb market.

"I was thinking about a substance which my father called *Bomgillion*, which is correctly pronounced *Balm of Gilead*. It was produced from the buds of balsam poplar tree and used with mutton tallow (taller), which when heated together on the back of the old wood-burning cook stove produced a salve which was used for chapped hands and other medical purposes.

"An old friend of ours visited us this summer (he is 79) and we drove him down to La Follette, Tennessee, to visit his relatives there. They had these Balm of Gilead trees growing in their yard. They look much like the Silver Leaf Maple, but the bud is sticky and tastes much like the bud from a fir tree (terrible!)."

Mrs. Click goes on to discuss a remedy entirely new to me and I wonder whether other readers have heard of it.

"My cousin from Kentucky once fell and cracked her knee cap, letting the fluid drain out into the flesh. Her knee became stiff, and after trying several doctors' medicines with no help, her folks consulted an old herb doctor, who suggested digging common old red worms and heating them also on the back of the old stove until a salve was formed which was applied to the knee cap. I don't know if this actually healed the knee cap, but she was about 10 years old at the time and now is in her 50's and has no stiffness whatsoever."

Memories of the once-familiar asafetida bag are less than pleasant for Mr. Click.

"I, too, remember the asafetida which my mother tied up in a piece of muslin and tied around my neck, supposedly to keep the germs away. It should have—it was a black, tary-looking substance which smelled to high heaven. It probably kept people away!"

A cough medicine probably familiar to other readers she still approves.

"One old remedy which worked then and still worked for my children was a cough syrup made from onion and sugar. They took an onion about the size of a teacup and sliced it thin, putting a teaspoon of sugar between each slice. It was then allowed to set until the sugar melted and formed a syrup. A teaspoon of this syrup was sipped when needed to stop a cough. My children loved it."

A recent item from a Los Angeles newspaper indicates that the old folk legend of the stolen package is still alive, though in somewhat contemporary circumstances. The release follows and needs no explanation.

"Mrs. Hollis Sharpe was walking her miniature poodle when a tall young man jumped out of an automobile and grabbed her.

"As she winced in pain and fell, the man snatched her plastic bag and ran.

"Mrs. Sharpe ended up with a broken left arm but was happy with the knowledge that the mugger had gotten what he deserved. The bag contained only dog waste."

Appalachian Place Names

September 24, 1975

Two readers have responded to the recent *Folk-Ways* column on place names of Appalachia, giving hope that additional items may soon be on the way.

LeVerne Fox, a Boone native, indicates that one of our more obvious omissions from the place names of Watauga County is Aho, a name which has often teased the curiosity of travelers between Boone and Blowing Rock on Highway 321.

Mr. Fox indicates that many stories surround the naming of this community, with most long-time Watauga residents giving credit for the name to the founder and president of what is now Appalachian State University, the late Dr. B. B. Dougherty.

According to Mr. Fox, post offices were once almost as common as country stores in the mountains and the furnishing of names for such often required a bit of head-scratching on the part of those responsible for such matters.

One such committee sat up late on a winter evening in Boone years ago pondering with little success the problem of naming a new rural post office some five or six miles south of the town.

As the evening wore on, some of the committee members grew sleepy, Dr. Dougherty being one of them. "Aye-ho," he said, as he yawned and stretched his arms above his head. "I think we should put off the post office naming until tomorrow."

"No need," said another member. "You've just supplied it!" And thus, presumably, Aho was born as an official community.

A letter from Dr. Cratis Williams, until recently the Acting Chancellor of Appalachian State University and a noted regional folklorist, contains additional information on a place name entry supplied from a study by Mr. Kent Cave (major source of the *Folk-Ways* column mentioned above).

Dr. Williams writes: "In your recent article on place names in Appalachia, you quoted from Mr. Kent Cave's study of place names in Watauga County comments about Big and Little Hessian, two mountain peaks near Zionville. The names of Big Hay-Shin and Little Hay-shin, which John Preston Arthur heard, are simply the old time way of pronouncing Hessian. The word sometimes had a *t* sounded at the end: *Hayshint*. The peaks were no doubt named for a Hessian soldier who settled there after the American Revolution.

"Big Ration and Little Ration, names used for the peaks following the Civil War, are probably local corruptions of the earlier names.

"In mountain speech today the word *hayshint* means a disobedient and defiant child, one who is stubbornly uncooperative.

"And while we're about it, perhaps I should correct certain information in the column entry on *Pigeonroost Creek*, a stream in the Valle Crucis area of Watauga County. In the name explanation it was noted that carrier pigeons once roosted in the trees beside the banks of the stream. Knowledgeable readers will know that *passenger pigeons* was my intention, that being the proper term for the wild pigeons which once abounded in great flocks in North America. They were widely hunted and the species is now extinct."

Mountain Speech

October 22, 1975

Despite a strong movement in recent years to preserve regional speech, it seems quite obvious that the battle is a losing one. As one writer recently put it, "Cronkiteism is destined to be the language of the Land."

But atop a few lonely Appalachian hills and up a number of isolated draws and hollers, a dwindling number of mountain folk still hold out against radio, TV, movies, consolidated schools, and other language levelers.

Some comments on the characteristics of their speech were explored recently by Elizabeth Maxwell, a student at Appalachian State University.

There are variations and differences in this language of Appalachia that are delightful to the rest of us English-speaking Americans. The purist notes a confusion of strong and weak verbs ("She caught the chicken"); the substitution of one part of speech for another ("Mowing is a slavish job," "Ye cain't fault her; she's jist natured that way," "a-backin' and a-forthin'"); intriguing shortened forms of familiar words (He's a strip of a boy"); archaic pronunciations ("Thet snake quiled up ready to strike"); invented words ("They was a regular upscuddle at the schoolhouse"); and twists in meaning ("I'm rite proud ye come," "an awful generation of youngins" [a large family], "a fair morning" [a beautiful day, a la *Oklahoma!*, not just sunny]. Having a limited vocabulary, the mountaineer will search for a term to express just what he feels, a fact that leads to a language rich in imaginative forms of expression and alive, forceful and memorable. His homely figures are suited to the occasion: "If it was raining soup, I'd be caught out with a fork," says a despairing loser.

As in Ireland, Appalachian speech has that poetic quality found among primitive peoples; Dr. Cratis Williams describes it as "not much of a leap between prose and song." A woman whose reputation for good deeds had preceded her arrival might be greeted: "Proud to behold ye, ma'am, the face and eyes of ye." Instead of prose, the mountain man uses poetic hyperbole ("There wasn't anything a-tall whatsoever to make a dollar out of"); he speaks in poetic metaphors and similes, usually farfetched, according to John West, with a stress that makes his speech soft, melodic, and plaintive ("A slide come along and took the house out like it was a-walkin' on top of the ground.")

Sometimes these figures are so personal or so regional that the reference is uncertain for "furriners," yet who could miss the significance of:

That new school teacher is proud as Dicye, or
Granma's peart as Snyder's pup, or
He's crazy as Sam Ford's feist?

There are similes that are unlikely or whose origins are, at least for an outsider, obscure. How did the hill-country man, far from the ocean, arrive at the expression: "Dumb as an oyster"? How honest is "honest as all get out"? It is useless to try to trap owls, as might be supposed from "sorry as owl bait"? And does the hour refer to the flower that blooms and fades in the afternoon or to the dark depressing time just before dawn in "dead as four o'clock"?

Often the apt comparisons of the mountaineer reflect his work or pastimes; he will encourage a shy youngster to "jist whetstone the wits o' ye and answer up," he calls a neighbor who has lied to him "as crooked as a fish hook," and his woman who is accustomed to the long hot process of making soap will call a friend's coffee "strong as lye."

While most of the figures of speech used in the Appalachians clarify and intensify actions and characteristics, some describe appearance with painful accuracy. Who could fail to pity a woman who is "plain as an old shoe" or "ugly as a mud fence daubed with chinkypins"? A little less opprobrious might be a girl "freckled as a ginnie pig." But occasionally the poetry and melody of the mountains can make of something everyday an uncommon sight—the peacefulness of a day when "the sun's as soft as an old blanket," the innocence and insistence of a girl who "looked like a hummin' bird 'round a rosey-bush," or the brightness of a "sky that looked like hit was purtied up for a frolic", or the gentleness of the preacher's blessing on "those whose heads were bloomin' for the grave," or the sweet helplessness of "just a little thing, like a junior."

But descriptive similes in the mountains are not always poetic; they can be sharp, sarcastic, brief and pointed. A stingy man may be "tight as hickory bark," or "so tight he screams," while a trustworthy friend,

who's "honest as the day is long," "wouldn't cheat you nary grain o' corn." A strong man is to be admired: he's "stout as a mule" "tougher'n a bullhide," and can "pack a saw log to hell and back afore breakfast"; a less fortunate fellow may be contemptuously described as "weaker'n a widder-woman's dishwater." An exasperatingly slow (even to the mountaineer) person is "slow as the seven-year itch," or "slow as grandma," or even "so slow he's the right fellow to send after the doctor if the devil was sick"!

A Washday "Receet" and Some Tales

December 10, 1975

Hometown papers, wending their way through devious routes to former residents of Appalachia, continue to prompt the sharing of folk material with this column.

Somewhat typical is a letter received this week from Mrs. Fannie Kilbian Akin of Akin, Illinois, who recalls early days near Brevard, North Carolina, her memory being stirred by a *Folk-Ways* column appearing in a paper brought back by a visiting relative.

Included with her memories of early days is a washday "receet" which should cause today's housewives to bless the modernity of their Maytags (no advertisement intended). It is reproduced below as received, with independence of spelling preserved.

Washday Receet

1. bilt fire in backyard to heet kettle of rain water.
2. set tubs so smoke won't blow in eyes if wind is pert.
3. shave one hole cake lie soap in bilin water.
4. sort things. make three piles. 1 pile white, 1 pile cullord, 1 pile work britches and rags.
5. stir flour in cold water to smooth, then thin down with bilin water. rub dirty sheets on board, scrub hard, then bile. Rub cullard, don't bile, just rench in starch.
6. spread tee towels on grass.
7. hang onld rags on fence.
8. pore rench water in flour beds.
9. scrub proch with hot soapy water.
10. turn tubs upside down to dren.

Like many former Old North Staters, Mrs. Akin longs to return to the hills of Blue Ridge: "I have a friend artist, Bob Timberlake of Lexington, North Carolina. He says the things I know and describe should be in a book (agreed!). I was born and raised right here in those good old Blue Ridges and would like to come back there and live."

An unidentified Watauga County reader sends us a number of folk stories of the tall tale variety. Readers may identify her "Just a Little Cold" with other geographical settings and with other animals than Old Red, the bull.

Just a Little Cold

It gets mighty cold sometimes in the winter on the top of Tar Gap up on the side of Stone Mountain. But because the spring, summer, and fall were nice and there was plenty of grass and water, Big Red the bull decided to make Tar Gap his year around home.

When spring would come around, Big Red would come out to the edge of Tar Gap to beller and bawl for a day or so. Then every cow in the valley below would go up for a few days of courting before returning to their valley pastures.

Their owners finally got tired of Big Red having his way with their cows up on Tar Gap so they decided to hunt him down and get rid of him.

But Big Red was too smart for them and he always got away. Then one bitter cold night Big Red began belling from the side of Tar Gap so loud that he could be heard all through the valley. All at once he stopped as if somebody had throwed a rope around his neck in the middle of a bawl, and when the valley folks went up to see why he had stopped, they found him froze stiff as a board.

It was too cold to bury him so they covered him with rocks, all of them breathed a sigh of relief to know that Big Red would no longer bother their cows. But when spring came around, lo and behold, the belling started again, almost as if the ghost of Big Red had taken over where he left off. Finally the valley farmers made their way to his rocky grave on the side of the mountain. It was covered over the same way they had left it, but the belling continued—the sound of his voice, frozen still that cold winter night, had just got thawed out in the first warm spring weather!

Folk Sayings

January 28, 1976

Folk expressions continue to filter in through the mail, brightening some of my wintry days and—as a Winston reader recently put it—"adding a pleasant spark to conversation and taking the pressure out of tense moments."

Cheryl Johnson of Winston-Salem added considerably to our word hoard this week by passing along expressions "that I've heard my brother and others use."

Expressions for Ugliness

You're so ugly you have to sneak up on a glass of water to get a drink.
He's so ugly that his momma used to borrow a baby to carry to church.
She's so ugly that when she was a baby her father fed her with a slingshot.
You didn't get beat with the ugly stick; you got splattered with the whole forest.

Lack of Common Sense

If your brains were gas, there wouldn't be enough to run an ant's motorcycle half around a dime.
If your brain was placed on a fork, it would look like a B-B pellet rolling down a four-lane highway.
You ain't got the brains God gave a screwdriver.

Bad Breath

Your breath is so bad it would knock a buzzard off a manure heap.
His breath smells like he's been chewin' his socks.

Disgust or Irritation

You make my rear end want to chew tobacco.
You make my rear end want to drink buttermilk.
You make my rear end want to bite corncobs.

Appearance

She's so flat-chested that her living bra died of malnutrition.
Her hair is so greasy you could fry a poultry house of chicken and have two gallons left.
She's a pirate's treasure—a sunken chest.

Definitions

hemorrhoid—a pest
limber lips—excessive talker
commode-hugging blues—nausea

Another reader, Mrs. C. E. Setzer of Newton, comments on favorite expressions of her father-in-law. She writes: "He had many sayings that I had never heard elsewhere. These must have been Catawba County sayings from way back.

"If he came inside on a cold, windy morning, he always said, 'That wind is comin' a *nigh* way.' To describe a person that he thought was lazy or shiftless, he said, 'That is the nighest nothin I ever saw.' To stress a point in my argument, he always said, 'I'll garant-dam-tee you I'm right!'"

"Just across the river in Alexander County, I heard another one that I thought was good: If a person's child missed his school bus, he was described as being *busleft*."

Chicken Lore

April 14, 1976

On most Easters I eat fried chicken with my in-laws. This year it was chicken salad. Tough chicken salad.

The change in menu goes back to Easter of 1975 when Grandpa Willie Robertson of Reidsville bought his grandchildren, Mark and Janean Pruitt, a hatch of dubs to add a touch of farm life to their new home on the outskirts of Reidsville.

For a number of weeks the chicks did well, kept indoors, watered and fed and petted by the grandchildren. Then as their growth spurted, they were moved out-doors into a wire-enclosed lot where they continued to thrive, that is, until a curious hawk spotted them from overhead.

Soon his visits had diminished the flock to four roosters and one pullet, who, discovering their wings and their identity (game fowl) took to the trees for safety.

They still warily visited the lot for food but became wilder with the passing weeks, completely forsaking the henhouse for their roosts in the trees.

Meantime the roosters had discovered their crowing powers and began to exercise them well before dawn. The Pruitts, blasted from their slumbers, muttered threats and attempted to get back to sleep. This agonizing routine was continued week after week.

Then on a chilly April morning the last straw: even the hen began to crow, a sure omen of bad luck. Jim Pruitt fell out of bed and headed for the chicken lot, a basket of feed in one hand, a gun in the other.

Scattering the seed in the lot, he uttered the magic words: "Here, chick, chick! Here, chick, chick!" Immediately the chickens came fluttering down from their roosts.

Rather than alarm the nearest neighbor with gunfire, Jim first attempted to corner the birds and stuff them into a sack. They dodged him like so many feathered Mercury Morrises.

Finally he faced the inevitable: he would have to shoot the roosters and hope that the hen would settle down to her destined role and provide a few eggs for the household. In short order he felled three of the roosters and took aim at the final member of the quartet. Just as he pulled the trigger, the hen walked into the line of fire and the speeding bullet took both fowls into poultry paradise.

"Jim," I said on Sunday as we gnawed the stringy chicken salad, "I hate to pull the Monday morning quarterback bit with you, but there are ways you could have avoided this. As a matter of fact, if you had

forsaken your citified ways for a spell and gone back to your folk learning, you could have saved the whole flock and we'd be eating a darn sight better today.

"What you should have done when that hawk flew over that first day was take certain precautions. The first thing you should have done was put a piece of flint rock or a spring pebble in the ashes of your fireplace. That almost always will ward off a chicken hawk.

"If somehow that didn't work, a brick in the oven should have been the next step. As a final resort, nothing would have been more sure than turning your washpot upside down."

Jim didn't say anything—just kept gnawing on his chicken salad like President Ford masticating a Texas tamale.

Plant Signatures

June 2, 1976

Of the many topics on which this column touches, none appears with more regularity than folk medicine or home remedies. And one of the more frequent questions posed has to do with plant signatures or the doctrine of signatures.

Call it superstition or not, a widespread belief once existed—and is still adhered to in some areas—that every plant had a "sign" which showed its use.

If the plant had leaves or flowers which were heart-shaped, it was supposed to cure heart diseases. If they were kidney-shaped, then the plant was recommended for kidney ailments. By the same token, head-shaped fruits or nuts from certain trees were assigned for problems of the head. And, following the same line of reasoning, a plant such as ginseng, whose root resembled the human body, might serve as a general tonic for the entire system.

If no sign existed in the plant to indicate its proper use, other aspects might be taken into account. For instance, the plant might be studied to see whether it bore any resemblance to a particular disease. If it were yellow, then it might be suggested as a cure for yellow jaundice. If it had a rough and scaly skin or bark, it might be used for skin problems.

On the other hand, just the opposite could hold true. A plant with very bright leaves might wind up as a remedy for anemia. One with a very flexible or limber stalk would be a likely cure for rheumatism and other stiff-joint complaints.

Authorities generally based the authority for the belief in plant signatures and the general belief in herbal medicine on the creation. After all, since plants were created simultaneously on the third day, then it made sense that each plant was designated for a very special use by man: "Behold I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of the earth."

An herb doctor would naturally tend to believe from this that God had placed a sign on each plant to show its use. Thus the idea still persists.

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Reminiscences of "Tweetsie"

June 9, 1976

Another June and again the voice of Tweetsie is heard in the land. It as always is a joyous sound, still another confirmation that winter is past, school is out, and the season of vacation is at hand.

For the young, Tweetsie's whistle signals the excitement and delight of a huffing, puffing, genuine brass-trimmed steam engine, a hissing, swaying ride across Broyhill Gorge on a 225-foot trestle, ferocious Indian attacks, and then a safe return home to Tweetsie Station.

For members of the older generations the sound awakens memories of other days when Tweetsie was known as The Stemwinder and ran on the ET&WNC line, affectionately dubbed "Eat Taters and Wear No Clothes." It also stirs memories of picnic excursions by train, soaped rails and stolen rides, scenic vistas, berry pickings, business trips and a conductor who acted as tourist guide, messenger boy, and personal shopper.

In the early days of the school, Appalachian State Teachers College students often boarded Tweetsie at dawn for a day's picnic excursion to Linville or Roan Mountain, flagging the engine down on the return trip from Johnson City and rolling into Boone at dusk.

Sometimes they soaped the rails which ran through the campus and chortled at the sight of Tweetsie's spinning wheels. Eventually the engineer licked them by carrying sand barrels in the cab to provide traction.

Businessmen often came by horse and carriage to the stations along the route, boarding the train for Elizabethton, Johnson City, and points beyond and being met by friends and relatives on their return.

Nancy Taylor, daughter of a pioneer Valle Crucis family, remembers that her father Charles or Squire Taylor needed no assistance in reaching the station at Elk Park when business took him away from Valle Crucis.

“When Dad had to be away on business, he would saddle Trixie, his favorite saddle horse, early in the morning and ride off for Elk Park to catch the train into Tennessee. Just before he hopped aboard, he’d tie Trixie’s reins to the saddle and away she’d go at full gallop. Nothing could stop her until she was safe in her stall back in Valle Crucis. She’d run over anyone or anything that got in her way!”

Gilbert Taylor, now a Raleigh businessman, remembers the welcome comfort of a Tweetsie ride after a long horseback jaunt to Elizabethton.

“My Dad owned a farm in Tennessee and the tenant’s horse died so there was nothing but for me to ride another work horse over to him. I was in the saddle for over 12 hours and when I delivered the horse, I headed for the railway station and a ticket to Elk Park. I tell you, sitting in that soft passenger seat after a day in the saddle was like falling into a king-sized bed!”

One thing about Tweetsie, though, according to Mr. Taylor, was that she was in no special hurry to reach her destination. Many times on the flats she might creep along at five to ten miles per hour, with the conductor stopping for picknickers, delivering a bundle of sang root or other herbs for a local digger, buying a spool of thread for a neighbor.

On the downgrade she might hit up to 40 or 50 miles an hour, only to creep up the next slope at a snail’s pace.

“She always made it back, though. Not even the ’40 flood could stop her permanently. Grover Robbins got her started again in ’56 and when June comes ’round, mountain folks start listening for her whistle. It wouldn’t be the same without Tweetsie!”

Frank Hodges’ Double Dulcimer

June 30, 1976

Frank Hodges believes that busy hands keep a body out of trouble. His own have been busy for over 40 years as cabinet and furniture maker and as creator of various small-craft items.

But the Watauga County native's busy hands philosophy has a special meaning in relation to his most recent project—a double or “courtin’ ” dulcimer, an instrument whose original purpose was both to advance the cause of love but at the same time keep courting couples out of mischief.

Hodges' model, like those on which it is modeled, is designed to be played by a male and a female seated facing each other with the double dulcimer resting on their knees.

“Since the fingering is usually done with the left hand and the strumming with the right,” says Hodges, “the dulcimers are placed in parallel positions, with the necks pointing in opposite directions.”

The players, he observes, sit so close together that even though the instrument is between them, their knees touch as do their hands when the music partners are so minded.

“In the olden days,” Hodges says, “the girl's parents figured things were under control as long as they could hear the music from both dulcimers. If one or both sides cut out, there was an immediate check-up to see if somebody's hands had wandered off the dulcimer.”

Exponents of the double dulcimer claim that playing this instrument is somewhat akin to dancing and may once have served as a substitute for this activity in communities where dancing was considered sinful.

Even as in dance, dulcimer partners learned to anticipate each other's musical movements and to manage an occasional kiss or caress without interrupting their rhythm and summoning a keen-eared chaperone.

Hodges' courtin' dulcimer has heart-shaped tone holes, a traditional feature of this instrument designed for love songs. Each side of the double instrument, when complete, will contain a set of three strings rather than the four or six sometimes observed on single dulcimers.

Some dulcimer authorities surmise that the three-stringed instrument—single or double—sometimes became associated with the devil since the devil's pitchfork sported three tines.

In addition, of course, the three-stringed single dulcimer was often played at dances and thus logically became known as an instrument of the devil.

On the other hand, some early dulcimers supposedly bore strange markings that were designed to drive the devil away. Loops and circles made him dizzy and a diagonal stripe on the back of the instrument would send him tumbling.

Frank Hodges doesn't expect his double dulcimer either to summon up Old Nick or send its players to a fiery abode. “It's more of a curiosity than anything. I'm enjoying foolin' with it and I expect a lot of folks will have a look at it when I take it to the next craft fair.”

More Folk Remedies

July 7, 1976

One of the most rewarding aspects of conducting this reader-response folk column over a period of three and a half years has been the institution of epistolary friendships with a number of readers.

Some of them have provided folk items almost from the beginning on a more or less regular basis. Others allow months to elapse between letters so that I begin to worry about them much as I would about members of my own family.

Thus I was delighted to hear again recently from Mrs. Harry Presley of Norton, Virginia, who seemingly has an unending supply of folk remedies handed down in her family from generation to generation. A portion of her letter follows:

"My grandmother was an oldtime herb doctor handed down from her father who was a doctor and used mostly herbs.

"She used boneset tea for colds and fever, witch hazel bark to stop bleeding from the uterus, ginseng root for stomach trouble and for a tonic.

"One thing she bought from a druggist was calomel. I remember she dosed it out on a tip of a penknife and you took three doses, then a dose of castor oil. It was a cure for most anything, especially yellow jaundice."

Mrs. Presley notes that her grandmother had definite ideas about exercise for babies with certain types of ailments.

"For babies that were liver grown, which happened, she said, from too little exercise, she run them through an open back chair—the homemade kind that had three slates across the back.

"She took them between the slats three times, then she turned them on their stomach and took the left hand and touched the right foot. Then she took the right hand and touched the left foot. After this she took them by the heels and turned them upside down three times.

"When the exercise was over she gave them three doses of calomel and castor oil that was supposed to start them on the road to good health."

Mrs. Presley observes somewhat wryly, "I've seen her do it, but I don't know how good it worked."

Teething and other childhood ailments also were the special province of the grandmother, according to Mrs. Presley.

"People would bring their babies that were teething, with their gums all swollen and suffering from diarrhea. She rubbed them through with a pocket knife, and before the babies left they would be laughing."

Getting rid of a sty involved a special ceremony, says Mrs. Presley.

"Grandmother said that to cure a sty, you go to where the road forks—that is, a road leading off the main road—and wish the sty on the first one that passes. She had a special rhyme to go with it, but I don't know what it was."

Visions of the Veil-Born

November 24, 1976

Throughout history folklore has carried accounts in stories and legends of the dead who have returned to the physical world to visit loved ones, avenge wrongs, or complete important tasks left unfinished as a result of their deaths.

It has been suggested that living persons who are able to see such apparitions may either be suffering from such intense emotion that their imaginations work overtime or else they are especially marked or gifted to view the supernatural.

In the latter instance, there is an Appalachian belief that a child born with a veil over its head (a thin membrane similar to that inside an egg shell) has that special power.

In the midst of a crowd of people such a person may be the only one to view the risen dead.

Mr. King Sturgill, Jr., of Bristol, Tennessee, recently sent us an interesting account of such a phenomenon. His letter follows without comment.

"Sometime ago I promised you that I would tell you some things that my Aunt Mary told me when I was small during the 1920's. I wonder if you have ever heard of such a thing, or anyone else for that matter.

"She said when she was just a little girl, her uncle lived just below them and he had an office in one room of the house. One day her aunt found him slumped over on his desk, dead.

"She said that he kept coming back and would always go in his office. So one day her aunt came up to her house and asked her father if he would go down and speak to him.

"He agreed on that so she got up on the horse behind her dad and rode down there.

"Well, the uncle walked in and her father said, 'In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, what have you come back for?'

"The uncle said that he had buried his money in the upper right corner of the garden. Then he told them how to divide it among the children and to give the colored cook \$50.

"Aunt Mary said after they found the two pots that she got down in the hole and removed the boards from the top of the pots. They then brought the pots to the back porch and poured the money out on an old wash stand and divided it as he had requested. Her aunt gave her enough money to buy material to make her a dress.

"Now here is the question. She said that in order to see a person in that form, you had to be born with a veil over your face and that her and her father both were born this way.

"She was sound of mind and never sick, and she also included every little detail. Of course, I believed this when she told me, though I don't now!"

Mr. Sturgill is curious to know of other such experiences, particularly as they concern those people who have been born with a "veil." Obviously so would I.

Weather Tales at Boone Drug

February 9, 1977

Will Rogers used to say that everybody talked about the weather and nobody ever did anything about it.

He ignored the fact that the talk itself can sometimes be helpful. How else could mountain folks endure their present miseries at sub-zero temperatures?

Joe Miller, a Boone druggist, recently posted some of the more colorful (and printable) expressions overheard from the early morning sessions of the coffee klatch in his store.

Raymond Jones, a resident of Sands: "I tell you that wind was so keen and strong this morning that it blew all the barbs on my fence all the way to end post."

Unidentified coffee drinker: "I wrapped up in the middle of the night at ten below zero to answer a call of nature. Blamed if the wind wasn't so strong it was playing anty-over with the outhouse!"

Fred Reece, Sugar Grove: "It was so cold on Monday that I saw two dogs with jumper cables trying to get a rabbit started!"

James Greene, Cove Creek: "I heard a knock this morning and went to the door. Danged if it wasn't the outdoor thermometer trying to get in out of the cold."

John Robinson, Boone: "I looked out the window the other day and saw my neighbor's hound dogs in full cry after a rabbit, though for some reason I couldn't hear their barking. Today the yard was full of sound but no dogs—it took a warm day to thaw out their barks."

Pete Leonard, Beech Mountain: "I was passing this car in a sort of congested area. The driver wouldn't give me passing room so I laid down on the horn. He still wouldn't move over, so I brushed on by him. About that time a patrolman pulled me over and cited me for not sounding my horn when I passed. I tried to tell him I had, but I couldn't convince him. This morning about three I woke up and heard a horn blasting somewhere. Finally I looked in the garage and figured the patrolman was right—my passing honk had just thawed out."

A letter from Cynthia King, a former Wallburg resident now living in San Jose, California, adds to our cold weather stories by passing along the following:

"In rebellion against the frigid arctic air, our water pipes froze and broke in four places on Christmas Eve. We finally caught up with Farmer Bjork, the local plumbing expert, whilst he was warming his usual spot at Max's Tavern, and he kindly rushed right over to stave off the encroaching flood.

" 'I had a feeling it was going to be a cold one,' he quipped as he sloshed through ankle deep, dirty basement water to pull the plug on the electric heater. 'But when I saw that earthworm trying to rob a woolly caterpillar of his coat, I knew it was serious!' "

Long Handles

February 16, 1977

Syndicated columnist Russell Baker recently devoted his satirical observations for the day to the fact that Americans except for members of the sporting world, have never been prone to willingly accept the donning of warm underwear.

Apparently willingness, if not eagerness, has suddenly been thrust upon them with the advent of the coldest winter in recent history.

Knitting mills and department stores indicate that their sales of long handled drawers are up 200 per cent or more over last year's sales, with demand exceeding supply in many parts of the country.

Perhaps this is an indication of things to come if winter thermostats must be kept in the sixties over the next few seasons. I tend, however, to go along with Baker: generally the less underwear the better.

I fell into talk with Bill Rucker, a Boone Southern Bell official, recently on this subject. He was strongly in agreement.

"I've hated long handles ever since I was forced to wear them to school when I was a kid. Every day my mother would check me out to see whether I had them on before I started my two-mile hike to school. But the blamed things itched and scratched so much that I always went into the bushes before I got to school, pulled them off and hid them till school was out. Then I'd dig them out and have them on again to undergo my mother's examination when I got home. She never knew that I hadn't worn them all day—as far as I know."

I had trouble abiding them through the day myself, whether they were two-piece, slit rear, or bucket-seated. I did find, however, that they served as mighty fine insulation against the icy sheets I had to slip between at night in a cold back bedroom.

I also remember that they served me well during a stint of military service in Alaska in World War II, not only against the daytime arctic winds but as a protection against the prevailing GI bed covering. Not icy sheets but a canvas-like mattress covering underneath and olive drab woolen blankets above—something akin to sleeping between two over-sized sheets of sandpaper.

Long handles are also a part of my most compelling memory of the Alaskan experience.

Picture, if you will, a gaunt, elongated mountain man, abed in his long underwear after a night on the town—Anchorage to be exact. Betrayed by his ill-considered solid and liquid diet of the event, he falls from his bunk and staggers toward the latrine, attempting along the way to free himself of the inhibiting long johns. They betray him.

Falling to his ankles they trip him and he plunges face forwards on the barracks floor six feet shy of the latrine, with all elimination systems working full force. It is a tale told best in other than mixed company.

Of course, modern long handles are a far cry from those of bygone days. They have been prettified, thermofied, and advertised until they have achieved social acceptance. Flowers and patterns have added a touch of sex appeal to the feminist garment, and the thermal aspect allows the male to strut his masculinity open-coated in zero temperatures.

Still long handles are long handles, and the memory of man is long. Besides an itch is an itch and a scratch is a scratch and in long underwear the twain do meet.

Poison Oak Cures

May 18, 1977

Aside from head lice and the itch, one of the more annoying ailments of my childhood was poison oak. Let me pass within a few feet of the lush green shrub and by the next day some portion of my anatomy was covered with an itchy red rash.

Somehow I thought I had developed an immunity to the stuff over the years, but a hedge-cleaning operation during the weekend brought the telltale itching, redness, and tiny blisters and a consequent visit to the corner drug store.

In my younger days, however, there was no store-bought remedy at hand. Thus I was subjected to a variety of treatments depending on the healing ingredients at hand.

Strong soap was usually a beginner. Either my mother or a sister would work a cake of homemade or Octagon soap into a paste and cover the infested area, bidding me let it be for a day or so.

Within the hour I usually had washed the burning substance away and demanded a new approach. Then I would watch in mingled fear and excitement as a shotgun shell was opened and the powder charge removed. This, in turn, was mixed in heavy cream and spread over the itching skin.

The burning was intense for a moment but easier to abide than the strong soap. Unfortunately this remedy was also shortlived since the gunpowder tended to fall away from the surface once the cream had dried. On occasion, however, it did effect a cure within a short while.

If further treatment was called for, the request might produce a concoction of milkweed cooked in sweet milk. When the liquid had reached a proper consistency, my mother would plop a fat biscuit into the mixture, soak up enough of the substance to make a paste and then spread it across the poisoned area. A clean flour sack cloth might then be tied around the infection to hold the medication in place.

Eventually a neighbor introduced me to the saving graces of jewelweed whose orange-colored juice seemed to work wonders when rubbed on poison oak or ivy.

Fortunately, once I had learned to identify the plant, I usually could find it growing somewhere in the same area infested by the poison oak. Thus if I felt I had been exposed to either ivy or oak, I simply broke some jewelweed stems and rubbed the juice over any exposed flesh.

Perhaps water would have served the same purpose so soon after contact. But regardless of that possibility. I became a firm believer in jewelweed, or snapweed, as I occasionally hear it called in the Appalachians.

The Cherokees, of course, had the ultimate answer to poison oak. They simply developed an immunity to its effects by eating the tiny young leaves of the plant when they first appeared in the spring, gradually moving to the larger leaves as the plant matured. A two to three weeks diet of the leaves brought immunity for the year.

I have a friend who once tried this Indian remedy. Unfortunately he started the treatment with full-grown leaves and wound up in the hospital with a dangerously inflamed and swollen throat.

Like me, he now relies on the corner druggist.

Cranberry Tales

November 30, 1977

A recent *Folk-Ways* column on cranberries brought a colorful response from Mrs. Dartha C. Frank of Catawba.

Not only does she confirm the existence of cranberry bogs in the early days of the Cranberry section, but she recounts some bloodcurdling Indian and wild animal tales passed down from "great-great-great Grandfather (Uncle Bill) Wiseman."

She writes: "My great-great-great grandfather used to tell his grandchildren of the cranberries of Cranberry, North Carolina in Avery County.

"There were more Injuns and whites killed there before the Civil War than anywhere else due to the cranberries. The Injuns used them before the 1800's as war paint mostly and dye. They never ate them, for to them Cranberry (where the town is now) was holy for them.

"The white men—Browns, Wisemans, Davenports, Wises, Hicks—all began to move in, and Ole Uncle Bill Wiseman befriended the Cherokees, but not other tribes. The whites began to find the cranberries good eating and went into the bogs to gather them.

"Sometimes the Injuns lay in wait for them. Also the area was full of black panthers.

"Uncle Bill told of his son's wife going hunting for meat and berries and starting back with a deer tied onto the back of her horse and bags of cranberries layed across the front, a sack on each side tied by a rope.

"A panther started trailing her close and Injuns started on each side to close in on her. Usually no one went in alone but with a group, but she did out of necessity. She started to throw out the scarce berries to the Injuns she knew were there and to cut off chunks of deer meat to throw for the panther.

"Each followed her home. When the men seen what was happening, they shot the panther in the pasture and killed six of the Injuns before they retreated. She had about a gallon of the berries left and mostly the front of the deer.

"Sometimes the Cheyenne Injuns used to come in from the North in the fall to gather the cranberries. They were not friends to Ole Bill, and he and the Cherokees sometimes had to fight the Cheyenne warriors. Ole Bill told of a Cheyenne chief's youngest son being killed in battle and carried off by the Cherokees at Cranberry.

"Later on the Cherokees began to follow Ole Uncle Bill's ways. They took cranberries and maize and made a big pot of stew or broth. Sometimes they used the cranberries to color their other cooked food.

"The Cherokees who died fighting in the old cranberry marshes had cranberries buried with them as a special honor.

"The cranberry bushes at Cranberry grew eight to ten feet high, as big as thorn bushes. They were also thick, making good cover for wild turkeys and other birds and game animals. The Injuns would never have broken even a twig of one bush. They walked through as easy as a cat.

"There were also wild gooseberries, raspberries, wild rice, and, by the way, a real red and pink dogwood tree even before 1800. I have seen them in the wild even in my day and time.

"The wild gooseberries were the size of Banty eggs and the bushes were real stiff and thorny. Before they were ripe they were green and then they turned a deep purple. The raspberries were huge and black and the wild rice was a rich yellow brown when ripe.

"A lots more I could tell you of Cranberry, North Carolina, and the cranberries, but assume you need not hear more."

Frank Warner

March 8, 1978

Anne and Frank Warner, writing in the *Appalachian Journal* in the fall of 1973, noted that "When Frank Proffitt died in November of 1965, the *New York Times* carried a six-inch double-column story, and stories about him appeared in leading papers across the country."

Frank Warner received equal billing last week from the *Times*, but the obituary headline, "Frank Warner, 74/Collected the Songs/Of the Rural East," and the story told little of the man himself and of his relationship with Frank Proffitt, banjo-maker, ballad-singer, and Appalachian farmer.

Watauga County folks knew the man and the story somewhat better, however, through the efforts of the *Watauga Democrat* and the ballad-collecting activities of Richard Chase, Doc Abrams, Cratis Williams and other folklorists of the region.

They knew that Frank Warner, a North Carolina native turned New Yorker, had met Frank Proffitt almost by chance when in 1938 he wrote Nathan Hicks, Mr. Proffitt's father-in-law, about making him a mountain dulcimer.

Correspondence turned into friendship and a subsequent visit by the Warners to the Hicks' household at Pick Britches.

There they met friends and relatives of the Hicks family, including son-in-law Frank Proffitt, who helped to make the visit a musical feast and inspired the Warners toward a lifelong career of collecting traditional folk music.

A portion of the Anne and Frank Warner account follows: "Before long everybody was making music. The sound, and the people, that afternoon gave us a feeling we have never lost. It was the beginning of our life-long interest in traditional music and the people who remember it. We had not come with the idea of collecting songs, but Anne couldn't help taking down in shorthand the words of three songs Frank Proffitt sang: *Dan Doo*, a version of the Child Ballad, *The Wife Wrapt in Wetherskin*; *Moonshine*, a story about the effect of homemade liquor; *Hang Down Your Head, Tom Dooley*, the song that twenty years later would have such an impact on Frank Proffitt, on us, and on the world."

The June visit ripened into a fast friendship between the Proffitts and the Warners, resulting in extensive correspondence, additional visits, and the collection of numerous ballads and other folksongs of the Appalachian region.

Eventually, Mr. Warner, both a collector and performer, helped to open the performance doors to Frank Proffitt, appearing with him at folk concerts and workshops across the United States. Always the Proffitt version of "Tom Dooley" was featured.

Finally the ballad appeared in the Alan Lomax Folk Song USA collection, was recorded by the Kingston Trio, and the rest is history.

Through the years the Warners made regular collecting trips along the Eastern Seaboard and into the Appalachians recording traditional folk materials. "Tom Dooley" and the story of Frank Proffitt is a part of their collection now in the Library of Congress.

At the time of his death Mr. Warner was at work on another collection of folksongs under a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The book is scheduled for publication within the year.

At Frank Proffitt's death, Mr. Warner wrote a moving tribute to his memory, a portion of which could apply to either man:

"If he was proud, it was of his mountains and his forebears who came from across the water, settled the land, felled the trees, broke the new ground, kept their songs and traditions, helped build the country. We can all be proud."

All of Appalachia can be proud of Frank Warner and his role in helping to preserve her rich heritage of folksong.

Tobacco Substitutes

May 3, 1978

Somewhere recently I noted that England had thrown in the towel on still another tobacco substitute—lettuce this time as I recall.

Judging by the present market price of this garden product, it may have been a matter of cost rather than taste which brought on the cancellation, but I doubt it. Smokeable lettuce?

Perhaps I shouldn't criticize it without trying it, but there were always so many alternatives, especially in those early years. Take cocoa and sugar, for instance, properly stirred and tucked next to the gum with a well-masticated blackgum twig. Rather messy, of course, but no worse than the real stuff which trickled down the chins of various elderly neighborhood ladies. Besides, at the age of seven who worries about a chocolatey chin?

When I became eight, however, I became more venturesome when a couple of worldly nine-year-olds introduced me to dried corn silks. What a thrill to puff away on a roll of silks, sometimes wrapped in a dried shuck, sometimes twisted in brown paper torn from a grocery bag! Unfortunately, after a half dozen puffs, the silks were consumed leaving a smoldering wrapper and a parched tongue.

So at the age of nine I was ready to move on to rabbit tobacco, real handcrushed filler good for cigarette or corncob pipe. Unlike corn silks, however, the rabbit tobacco burned so stubbornly that one pipeful pretty well exhausted a box of kitchen matches so that one sucked in almost as much match as tobacco smoke and after suffered the blind staggers when he attempted to walk.

At ten I was ready to move up still another notch, this time to cigars. First, I tried my hand at dried grapevine. Like rabbit tobacco, it was hard to keep going and the tongue bite was so sharp that one had to rest a day or two between smokes.

This led me to jackvine, which, somewhat more porous, burned more efficiently than the grape. Unfortunately, the taste was flat as a result of letting through too much air.

Eventually at the age of ten I thought I had reached the ultimate in smoking satisfaction and sophistication. I had discovered the joys of Indian cigars, those wondrous thin brown panatellas sometimes called smoking beans.

Up to fifteen inches in length, these cigars cried out for an audience when the smoker lighted up. I was the envy of the neighborhood when I puffed away in front of my youthful cohorts, occasionally passing out a few sun-toasted samples to special cronies.

Unfortunately my bliss was spoiled one day when a new kid turned up with a tin of Prince Albert and a couple of packs of Zig-zag wrappers.

Like the British, I haven't been able to accept anything but the genuine article since that day.

Academic Lore and "Ferry Dittles"

May 10, 1978

Folklore is usually looked on as the unrecorded traditions of a people and is most often associated with the remains of early cultures surviving in the folk, usually in fairly isolated areas.

More recently, however, certain types of written material have been grudgingly admitted to the study, including the graffitti scrawled on public walls, sidewalks, school desks, and black boards.

On the college scene the more colorful graffitti usually appears on restroom walls, with the ladies (so I am told) beginning to catch up with the gentlemen in this semi-literary endeavor.

But a gentler sort of graffitti also exists on campus, often flowering in the spring on departmental bulletin boards, and usually the work of deskbound professors who long to be on the tennis court or golf course.

A prime example is the following bit of word play which evolved over a period of several days on the Appalachian State University English Department bulletin board. It numbers contributions from sundry members of the staff who paused to read, added an entry, and chuckling, went their way.

Word Games in Academe

A mobile of homes
A cord of wood

A riot of students
A host of parasites

A cloud of Canadian Mist	A range of ovens
An orgy of busy bodies	A nun of your business
A twiddle of de dumb	A gag of maggots
A knot of contortionists	A pride of missions
A squeeze of misfits	A shuffle of administrators
A horde of misers	A sulk of students
A flash of exhibitionists	A squeeze of virgins
A mine of egoists	A whack of Portnoys
A complement of sychophants	A gaggle of jokes

Perhaps the inspiration for the above was the old chestnut about the four Oxford dons who, during an evening stroll, encountered a group of ladies of the evening.

"My word," said one. "What a jam of tarts!"

"Quite an essay of pros," said the second.

"A veritable anthology of trollops!" exclaimed the third.

"A marvelous flourish of strumpets," blared the fourth.

And, speaking of word play, Dr. Cratis Williams, distinguished Appalachian regional folklorist, offers a possible solution to the puzzle of *ferry diddles*, an expression recently referred to us by Ms. Lucy Cardwell of Hickory. He writes:

"Re: *ferry diddles*. I have never heard this expression used, but I suspect that *ferry* relates to *fare* (travel) and that *diddles* refers to such personal items as women might need to carry along with them on a trip. *Diddle* as a verb in mountain speech means to "fool around; waste time; pretend to be busy at accomplishing a task." It suggests *cheating* or *pretending*. If this meaning carries over to *diddles* as a noun, then *diddle* could refer to such things as perfumes, ointments, powder, and possibly personal items like panties, hose, bras. For children, *diddles* might mean fine clothing. Thus, *ferry diddles* might mean things one takes on a trip with him.

"*Diddle* also means to engage in sex play. We used to refer to night spots as places to which we could go to 'dine, dance, and diddle.' I cannot relate *diddle* in this context to *ferry*, unless it connotes personal items for use in making one sexually alluring while on a trip. Possibly fine clothing is expected to do this."

Appalachian Blue John

June 14, 1978

Beth Tartan, *Winston-Salem Journal* Home Economist, recently welcomed in National Dairy Month (June) by listing and defining some eighteen types of milk sold today in the public market.

For better or for worse we've come a long way. When I was growing up there were but two kinds: sweet milk (whole raw milk) and buttermilk, though we did recognize the fact that sweet milk could be divided into cream and skim milk. Or perhaps I should say that the sweet milk simply divided itself by allowing the cream to rise and the skim milk to stay put.

Thus when a family member wanted to whiten his coffee, he poured from the top of the milk pitcher; when he wanted a glass of milk to drink he stirred the contents of the pitcher to produce a proper mixture.

That is if the elders were looking; if not he might sneak solid cream into his glass.

As a matter of fact if the family cow happened to be going through a generous period all members might have this privilege, with the skim milk poured over food scraps and earmarked for the hogs.

I was reminded of this practice recently when a longtime Boone citizen who had been a dairyman in the 1950's passed away.

At that time I lived in Florida during the winters and spent my summers in the mountains involved with outdoor drama.

I first met my dairyman friend during a search for skim milk in June of 1953.

My wife, pregnant at the time, was on a skim milk kick in an attempt to hold her weight down. The kick, unfortunately, was not shared by enough of the Boone populace to necessitate the stocking of skim milk in the local markets.

Thus a search for the product brought me to the small dairy where I made my wishes known to the operator.

"Skim milk? Well, we might still have a small batch in the back that we've poured off. Whatta you want that stuff for?"

I explained my wife's dietary problem.

"You mean to say she actually drinks that old blue john? Why, all that's fit for is to slop the hogs!"

I indicated that she was reasonably sane and had been blue johning for the last six months. So reluctantly he disappeared into the back of the dairy, eventually emerging with a half gallon container of milk.

Asked the price, he again hesitated.

"To tell you the truth, I don't rightly know what to charge you. I can't remember ever selling a bottle of the stuff before. Would fifteen cents be all right?"

On my acting salary fifteen cents was indeed all right, and for the rest of the summer I paid regular visits to my dairyman friend, though he still continued to eye me somewhat askance even up to the day of my late-summer departure for the flatlands.

The year rolled around and June of '54 found me back at the familiar stand. But things had changed. There in the milkcase boldly labelled stood bottle after bottle of skim milk.

Appalachian blue john had become respectable.

Jake

September 6, 1978

I can't eat, I can't talk.
Been drinkin' mean jake, Lord
Now can't walk.
Ain't got nothing now to lose
Cause I'm a jake walkin' papa
With the jake walk blues

Recollection of this old blues song recently came in a rather unusual way. Walking through a wooded area near my home one day, I came across a collection of empty vanilla flavoring bottles.

Immediately my mind flashed back to the various other liquor substitutes which were making the rounds during my early years: bay rum, peppermint extract, lemon and orange flavoring, and a host of patent medicines with high alcohol content, including the infamous extract of Jamaica ginger.

Containing up to 70 per cent alcohol, "jake," as it was often called, was offered as a medication by drug stores and other agents and was an especially big seller in dry counties of the South.

Usually it was "cut" or adulterated with such substances as molasses, pine resins, herbal extracts and the like. It was usually found in two-ounce bottles which sold for about thirty-five cents each.

Sometimes the purchaser took the contents straight; at other times he might use it to make a bowl of party punch a little more interesting.

It was capable of bringing on a pretty good buzz, often followed by a hangover, but usually offered no more problems than conventional alcoholic drinks.

Then at about the turn of the 30's a new "cutting" solution for the jake was introduced: a compound known as TOCP (tri-ortho-cresyl phosphate).

Soluble and tasteless, it appeared to serve its purpose well. Unfortunately, however, it also affected the cells of the spinal cord and often caused the user to develop what was known as the "jake" or "jake leg" paralysis.

If he recovered sufficiently to be able to walk, it was with a high-stepping gait somewhat akin to that of polio victims. It became known as the “jake leg” or “jake walk” and resulted from the inflexibility of the user’s feet and ankles.

The paralysis claimed thousands of victims, including heavy concentrations in such Southern Appalachian states as Kentucky and Tennessee.

Reaction was also widespread. Some ministers claimed that the “jake” was a punishment sent by God because of the sins of mankind.

Quack doctors rushed forward with various medications guaranteed to bring cures or at least relief.

Folk healers offered mud packs and herbal cures.

Clinics especially designed to treat the Jamaica Ginger Paralysis sprang up in strategic locations.

And folk musicians filled the air with their blues, echoing the lamentations of the “jakies.”

I went to bed last night, feelin’ mighty fine,
Two o’clock this morning, the jake leg went
down my spine.

I had the jake leg too,
I had the jake leg too.

Molasses-Making on a Box-Boiler

September 20, 1978

Until my recent trip to Rutherford County to view Steve Wallace’s molasses operation, I had never seen a compartmentalized or maze boiler in action.

Perhaps my ignorance was due in part to the fact that mountain folk seem to favor the open box-boiler which is filled to capacity with juice, with no refilling until the contents are boiled down into molasses.

Once this stage is reached, the box-boiler, unlike the fixed-position model, must be lifted from the firebox and placed in a slightly tilted position at another location. Here the contents are strained through cheesecloth into appropriate containers.

Ned Austin, a Boone barber-actor, has a vivid memory of a box-boiler operation during his childhood in the Winkler’s Creek section of Watauga County.

“I remember the cane grinding was done by mule power and that one of the men tending the boiler was very careful about the firewood he used to keep the fire hot enough to bring the cane juice to a boil. Generally he wanted oak, poplar, locust, or other hard wood.

"But the men who had hauled in the wood for the molasses-making had thrown in several sassafras poles. When he saw them he went into a regular conniption, throwing the poles to one side and warning the other fire-stokers that burning sassafras would bring on the worst kind of luck.

"Unfortunately he quit the operation early that afternoon, and when he was out of sight the other men threw the sassafras on the fire. That night his house burned to the ground and two family members were killed. I've always felt a little uncomfortable about burning sassafras wood since that time."

Nancy Taylor, descendant of a pioneer Valle Crucis family, has more pleasant memories of molasses-making and the importance of "long sweetenin' " (as opposed to "short sweetenin' " for sugar) in the cooking and eating habits of her family.

"My dad, who was usually known as Squire Taylor, had a horse-drawn mill, along with a box-boiler and he made molasses every fall for us and any of the neighbors who brought their cane by.

"He stored his molasses in ten-gallon lard buckets, and my mother saw to it that there was always a cruet filled and sitting on the table. That's how my dad started every meal—with molasses, not biscuits, and a quarter pound of springhouse butter. After that he was ready for the regular meal."

Nancy recalls that Squire Taylor also counted on his neighbors to favor his attraction to molasses and other mountain food specialties when he dropped by for a visit.

"He was known all over the valley and when he'd ride out on business he wouldn't hesitate to stop at some farmhouse when he got hungry and go in for a snack.

"Always he would ask for some molasses, butter, cornbread, and a glass of buttermilk. If he found nobody home, he'd simply go to the kitchen and springhouse and help himself. Dad always was one to have a nap in the afternoon, and a number of times a family which had been working in the field would come in, see an empty buttermilk glass on the table, and find him napping on one of their beds."

As to cooking needs, Nancy vows that her family would have been lost without "long sweetenin'."

"We used molasses in pumpkin pie, cakes, bread, sweet potatoes, acorn squash and almost anything else you might want to sweeten. Not just because sugar was scarce and high but because of the molasses flavor. You couldn't beat it then or now."

Making Do

November 15, 1978

On a long, lazy Saturday recently I posed the question of food shopping needs for the weekend to my family.

"Oh, let's just make do," suggested my spouse.

Make do in this instance meant rummaging through the freezer and canned goods stock rather than making a special purchase for weekend fare. I suspect that the same definition applies in general to most contemporary householders rather than the earlier implication of *making out* with substitutes of poorer quality or stretching the lives of household items by mending them in devious ways.

In my childhood making do was often connected with hand-me-downs and patch-ups. For example I walk around today on claw-hammer toes because of too-short shoes inherited from an older brother, and I could swear that my painful callouses are the result of patching the soles of those shoes with stripping cut from a pasteboard box or a pair of discarded shoes.

Like the jeans of today my overalls bore assorted patches, stitched on out of necessity rather than in deference to style. When those same overalls outlive their wearing stage, they were cut into quilting or patching scraps. Occasionally a suspender section became the finger on a worn-out pair of gloves.

The gloves themselves might later become patching material for splits or holes in shoe uppers, and tattered quilts sometimes became floor pallets for animals or children.

Household sheets were almost as long-lived as quilts. No longer suitable for beds, they often were fashioned into slips, diapers, handkerchiefs, bandages, quilt scraps and patches.

No such thing as pajamas for the Whitener family. Younguns and adults alike made do with union suits, worn under the clothes during the day and under the bedclothes at night. Boiled in an iron pot on washday and dried on a handy bush, they scarcely had time to lose their body heat before being donned again.

Union suit scraps made fine cleaning rags when the wearing days were over and in addition often served as excellent shoe shine rags.

Shirts gained prolonged life through the ingenious skill of mother or sister. When cuffs and collars became worn and frayed, the logical step was to turn them over to expose the relatively unworn appearance of the erstwhile inner surface.

Interestingly enough, I followed this practice even into my college years when I discovered that a Boone lady "took in" laundry and turned shirt collars for Appalachian students.

Another stretching procedure carried into academic life had to do with shoes. Shortly after arriving on the Appalachian campus, I discovered that brown shoes were simply not worn in the evening for social occasions and for official college events such as lyceum programs.

With feet too large to make borrowing black shoes from a hallmate feasible, I resorted to the use of a recommended dye and shine product. The result was quite passable so long as the weather stayed dry, but on a rainy or snowy evening the tops often took on a piebald appearance. My only comfort was the fact that many of my fellow students were also making do.

Mountain Superstitions

December 6, 1978

Many of the superstitions which Appalachian folk observe or have observed in times past are centered around holidays.

Yuletide in particular is an illustration of this fact, as Al Traver, Executive Director of the Sugar Mountain Property Owners Association, recently reminded me.

Many of the superstitions, he notes, are concerned with weather, and he lists the following examples:

Christmas Weather Proverbs

If the sun shines through the apple trees on Christmas Day, there will be an abundant crop the following year.

A green Christmas makes a heavy harvest.

A green Christmas makes a fat churchyard.

At Christmas, meadows green; at Easter, covered with frost.

The shepherd would rather see his wife enter the stable on Christmas Day than the sun.

If windy on Christmas Day, the trees will bear much fruit.

A warm Christmas, a cold Easter; a green Christmas, a white Easter.

Easter in snow, Christmas in mud; Christmas in snow, Easter in mud.

Christmas on the balcony, Easter by the fire.

If Christmas Day on Monday be, a great winter that you'll see,
and full of winds, both loud and shrill.

If ice will bear a man at Christmas, it will not bear a mouse afterwards.

If on Christmas night wine ferments in the barrel, a good wine year will follow.

When the blackbird sings before Christmas, she will cry before Candlemas.

Thunder during the Christmas week indicates there will be much snow during the winter.

But Christmas superstitions are also frequently related to good and back luck signs, along with suggested measures to avoid ill fortune.

Bad Luck Superstitions

A meowing cat before Christmas dawn is a sign of bad luck.

It is bad luck to wash on Fridays and Saturdays before and after Christmas.

It is bad luck for a boy and a girl to kiss under mistletoe unless they intend to be married. If they do not marry, the mistletoe under which they have kissed must be burned to avoid ill fortune.

Holly brought into the house before Christmas will lead to family quarrels.

Burning green holly brings bad luck.

It is bad luck to give a pocketbook as a Christmas present unless it contains money.

It is bad luck to receive handkerchiefs as Christmas gifts. Every handkerchief means another year before being married.

Good Luck Superstitions

A sprig of holly hung over the door will ward off evil spirits.

Holly placed in a barn or stable will insure the well being of stock.

Twelve sage leaves picked at midnight on Christmas Eve will enable a young girl to have a vision of her future husband.

Christmas mistletoe hung around the neck will keep witches away.

Serve family big red apples at Christmas; then sit under a pine tree and you will hear the angels sing.

Leave a loaf of bread after the Christmas evening meal to prevent want during the year ahead.

Give your cat a second supper on Christmas to bring good luck.

Serve a sprig of holly with the Christmas pudding to avoid losing a friend.

Burn a branch from an elder tree on Christmas Eve to reveal all witches in the neighborhood.

A Maul Tale

April 4, 1979

In the several years I have been involved with the weekly edition of *Folk-Ways*, I have acquired various craft items, work implements, and the like which help to add a confused look to my office.

There was also no order in their acquisition: most simply represent a person or a place, at one time or another the focus of a column.

One item in particular draws a fair amount of attention from passersby. It is a huge maul with a head of blackgum and a handle of hickory, purchased at the old Mast Store in Valle Crucis some years back.

In early times similar mauls were used for such farm chores as driving fence posts, splitting rails, and the like. Often they were one-piece affairs fashioned from a hickory log. They were incredibly tough, much to be preferred in durability to the one I own.

Mine, however, has a story association going back to a winter day and a tall tale session by a group of Valle Crucis farmers gathered around the double-potbellied stove in Mast Store.

One of them had brought in a number of homemade items for sale or barter: bark baskets for huckleberry picking, wooden stirring spoons, several axe handles, and the maul.

The maul brought on a story by a longtime Valley resident.

"You remember Jake Early who lived up the Dutch Creek Road? Well, him and his boy Jim was right good hands at farming and keeping up their place in general, but Jake was so high tempered that a little thing would set him off. And since Jim was usually the closest one by, it was him who got cussed and threatened.

"Jake also had a borrowin' neighbor who had a way of keepin' what he borrowed. Well, one day Jake decided he'd split some chestnut rails to close in a haystack, but he couldn't find his maul, high or low.

"By this time he had up a full head of steam. 'Jim,' he yelled. 'You get yourself over this minute to Ned Green's place and fetch me my maul. If you ain't back with it in a half hour I'll solid skin your hide and his'n too.'

"Jim, he took off like a shot for the neighbor's, but they was no findin' that maul anywhere. So back he come empty-handed. By this time Jake was ready to explode.

"'Blame you, boy,' he said, 'I'll teach you to come back home without my maul!' And with that he lit in on the boy with a hickory stick the size of your thumb.

“Well, Jim was a right good-sized boy and decided he’d had enough of that. So that night he gathered up his duds and lit out of the Valley.

“He wound up somewheres on the west coast, got him a good job, and went on to law school. When he got out of school he set up his law office and done real good.

“By and by he decided to come home for a visit, so before he drove up to the old homeplace, he stopped by the store and bought him a maul.

“When he drove up to the house there was Jake sitting on the porch sunning himself. Jim jumped out of his car, reached back and grapped the maul, and slammed it down in front of Jake.

“ ‘All right, Paw’ he says. ‘Here’s your damn maul!’ ”

A Bobcat Tale

May 9, 1979

In recent years much has been written and said about the return of the “painter” or cougar to the mountains of Appalachia.

The thought is enough to send chills down the spines of folks who live in isolated sections.

But it isn’t the threat of painters that bothers Valle Crucis resident Will Byrd. It’s the reality of bobcats.

Will, who resides several miles up the Dutch Creek Road, has been plagued for a number of years by various representatives of this member of the cat family who have eyes for his considerable collection of barnyard fowl.

“Not my fowl, really,” says Will. “They belong to the mizzes—she likes to keep them around for company.”

The “company,” as Valle Crucis residents know, comes in considerable number and variety: all shapes and sizes of turkeys; an assortment of chickens, largely Domineckers and Rhode Island Reds; a dozen or so ducks, both the wild and domestic; occasionally geese and guineas, to say nothing of hawks and owls who drop in without invitation.

The bobcats were also uninvited. But they dropped by several nights in a row last winter with devastating results. During a period of three nights, according to Will, some thirty-four chickens came squawking from their tree perches into the jaws of a supersized male, his slightly smaller spouse, and three growing kittens.



Will Byrd and his wildcat. Valle Crucis, N.C., June 1981.

The *modus operandi* of the marauder was not difficult to fathom. Even those but slightly acquainted with the hunting habits of bobcats know that they are quite capable of climbing trees or leaping into lower branches. In this instance it was the male who climbed the roosting tree and drove the frightened flock to the ground and to their death.

Those who survived were subjected to the same tactics the next night and the next until only a handful were left.

As Will tells it, one survivor, a giant Rhode Island Red rooster, was so shaken by the first night's experience that he refused to go back to the roosting tree again.

"That old rooster was so scared," says Will, "that he wouldn't go near that tree. Instead he started roosting on the axle of an old piece of farm equipment. He got by the other raids, but one cold night his feet froze to the axle and he lost both of them. From then on he waddled around on his two stumps until an owl reduced him to a bunch of feathers one night!"

A gentle soul, Will is generally at peace with the animal world. He is not one to begrudge a passing hawk or owl an occasional meal from his barnyard bounty. But thirty-four chickens lost in three nights!

Before the week was out he had set his traps for the bobcat invaders, catching the family one by one and having them mounted as gifts for friends.

The male, however, occupies a special place in the living room of the Byrd family trailer.

Sitting on the center table, he appears to be ready to spring at the unsuspecting visitor, a maniacal snarl on his face.

"That's the way he went out," says Will. "The trap had just caught him by his claws and he had pulled it up with him into the lower branches of the roosting tree. He was ready to pounce on me when I shot him with my pistol."

Made to look gaunt and hungry in the mounting process, the bobcat probably weighed in at close to fifty pounds in his chicken-hunting days.

No time to worry about painters with a bobcat that size in the neighborhood.

Mountain Wedding Customs

May 23, 1979

Of the various social customs practiced in Appalachia in days gone by, the *infare* and the *chiveree* (shivaree) were perhaps among the most traditional.

For the uninitiated, the infare was a bit of frolicking at the home of the groom, usually in the afternoon after a morning wedding.

At this occasion the groom furnished the whiskey, food, and sweets (usually candy for the ladies) for a proper celebration.

The celebration itself usually included folk dancing, singing, games, and occasionally a certain amount of horseplay during which bride and groom were made to suffer certain indignities of a minor nature.

The chivaree, on the other hand, took place at night, and the indignities forced on the married couple were sometimes not only downright embarrassing but a trifle rough.

The chivaree setting was the cabin to be occupied by the newlyweds the first night. But even before the couple reached the cabin, some mischievous soul had attempted to sneak into the bedroom and "cowbell" the mattress.

Then after the couple had been given time to retire for the night, the chivaree officially began. A crowd of friends and neighbors descended on the cabin, armed with dishpans, washtubs, and other noise-making instruments.

Individuals shouted crudities, kicked on doors, shone their lanterns through windows, and otherwise attempted to force the couple to open

the door for a continuation of post-wedding festivities. At this time the groom might invite the group in for food and drink, singing and dancing.

Occasionally the party grew rough and the couple would be taken to the nearest body of water for a dunking. Sometimes the couple were separated. The groom, for instance, would be taken several miles from the cabin and forced to walk back to his bride. Meantime an enterprising young man—perhaps a former suitor—might attempt to assume the groom's role.

Probably because of modern transportation and the out-of-town honeymoon, the infare and chivaree are seen only in watered down versions by way of reception and decorated honeymoon car.

Recently, however, there seems to be a revival of a wedding tradition involving elements closer to the original infare and chivaree.

For instance, a Winston-Salem reader reports that her son was recently wed in a Blue Ridge Mountains setting in Carroll County, Virginia, and was greeted by a bit of matrimonial frolicking still practiced by natives of that area.

"After the wedding reception," she writes, "some of the guests, who were native to the area, put the bride in a wash tub and paraded her around the motel where the reception was held. They put my son on a split rail and paraded him around also.

"I understand that the traditional procedure is for members of the community to come to the newlyweds' home at bedtime and parade them around the house in this fashion and spend several hours there singing! They tell me this practice is called 'serenading' and is a very old custom practiced by those people who live on the top of the mountain."

Barbershop Lore

August 14, 1979

Larry Matheson, downtown Boone barber, came in slightly late one morning last week, his face ruddy and glowing as if he had just completed his summer vacation.

"Hey, man, must be nice to have a week at the beach," said his customer, climbing into the barber chair.

"Man, you don't know how wrong you are," said the barber. "I just got shaved by a woman barber!"

And, indeed, a closer examination revealed tiny nicks and otherwise reddened flesh that spoke of a dull razor wielded by a novice barber.

"Truth is, I was more patient—maybe guinea pig—than customer," said Larry. "A friend of my wife's who was in barber college had to demonstrate that she could shave a man before she could get her license. Unfortunately, they don't teach shaving in barber school these days so she was a mite rough."

A little inconsistent, no doubt, but understandable. Where shaves outnumbered haircuts more than ten to one in days of yore, the reverse is true today, according to Jerry Wilson, veteran Boone barber.

"I don't know about the bigger cities," says Jerry, "but in the small towns and villages the shaves would outnumber the haircuts a dozen to one. You see, lots of wives would cut their husbands' hair, but they couldn't handle the shaving. Fact is, the barber had a rough go, too. You take a man who's gone without a shave for a week and has been haying or logging, chewing tobacco or dipping snuff—he's got face fur like a squirrel.

"Sometimes you'd get a face so tough you'd use up a half dozen hot towels and have to strop your razor a dozen times in the process. What you needed was a two-handed drawing knife instead of a straight-edge razor!"

But according to Jerry it was the turkeynecks who presented the real challenge.

"You've seen these skinny old men with their neck flesh wrinkled like an old gobbler? You'd have to pull and stretch the skin until you could slide the razor up his neck without cutting him.

"I remember one time I had this old turkeyneck in my chair and he had lost all his teeth so that his lips were all drawn in. I had to put my finger in the corner of his mouth to try to stretch his skin smooth.

"Finally he looked up at me and said, 'Jerry, if you keep on pulling like that you're going to have my knee skin stretched up over my navell' "

There's a real art in handling a straight razor regardless of the face it shaves, according to Jerry.

"The main art is in the stroke, just like that with a mowing scythe. First, you've got to lay the blade flat and then move it in a sort of half-moon stroke.

"Even then you may have some customer complaining about your blade being dull. And no matter how many times you strop your razor you can't really tell if it's sharp until you lay it on a man's face. Even then you may hit a wart or a mole and get a yelp from the customer especially if his beard is heavy enough to hide the blemish.

"I remember one time I was shaving a man with an awful heavy mustache. After I had hit a stroke or two he said, 'Oh, I forgot to tell you—there's a good-sized mole right under my nose.'

“ ‘Friend, there ain’t any more,’ I says, and I began looking for my styptic powder to try and stop the bleeding. It took me a good fifteen minutes to stop it, and he was lucky—the mole never came back.”

Now it’s the shaving customer who never comes back. Jerry, who owns an excellent shaving reputation based on past performance, says he averages perhaps one such customer per week.

Because of the lack of practice he has now given up both straight razor and strap, using a modified straight razor with refill blades.

“The blades are shorter and safer,” he says, “and they don’t require you to do all that stropping.”

Now if he can just convince that once per week shaving customer to settle for just a haircut, Jerry will have it made.

A Bull Story

October 3, 1979

The last time I talked with Milt Moretz he was in the market for a bull.

It wasn’t that he didn’t have one. Trouble was that he had more bull than he wanted to handle.

Fact is, he’d been handled *by* the bull, and he had a broken arm to show for it.

Milt, like a number of his Watauga County neighbors, holds down a fulltime job from eight to four, five days a week (He’s Maintenance Supervisor at the Appalachian State steam plant) and does a bit of farming and cattle-raising in his spare time.

Several weeks ago he decided that his old bull had scattered too many kinfolk among the herd and that a new, younger male should be acquired to help keep the breed from deteriorating.

Accordingly, the superannuated bull went on the block, and a 22-month-old youngster inherited his charges.

Milt found the new bull to his liking. For his age and size (about a thousand pounds) he proved to be surprisingly gentle, even submitting to the insertion of a nose ring without rebelling.

Furthermore, the ladies of the herd found him highly attractive. Things looked very promising on the Moretz farm.

Unfortunately, however, appearances sometimes are deceiving, even in the animal world. This, in the instance of young bull, proved to be the case. The flower-sniffing young Ferdinand overnight became a son of Satan.

On a day when the unsuspecting Milt had come into the pasture to replenish the salt supply, the young bull charged his benefactor, knocking him to the ground and pummeling him with his head.

With one arm out of commission, Milt grabbed with the other for the nose ring. Hooking his finger through the ring, he began to twist it, slowly bringing the bull to the ground and freeing his own broken arm.

Immediately he was on his feet and running toward the pasture fence, the bull in hot pursuit. Clearing the fence with a good margin of safety, Milt turned and shook his good fist at the bull. "Young man," he said, "you've just lost yourself a good home!"

By the next week the young bull was, indeed, on the block, even though Milt had by this time come to joke about the experience.

"In a way," he said, "it reminded me of the old story about another farmer who had a rambunctious young bull. One day a smart alecky state agricultural agent appeared at the farm and wanted to inspect the farmer's herd.

"The farmer, short of words, said, 'No, you can't go down in my pasture.'

"With that the agent flew into a temper and waved a set of official-looking papers under the farmer's nose. 'You see these credentials? They'll take me anywhere I want to go'

"The farmer studied him for a minute and then said, 'If I was you, cree-dentchuls or no, I wouldn't go down in that pasture.'

"With that the agent tore open the fence gate and strode down through the pasture. Almost instantly the resident bull was upon him, knocking the agent to the ground and standing over him in a threatening manner.

" 'Help! Help!' yelled the agent. 'Get me away from this bull!'

" 'Show him your cree-denchuls,' the farmer answered. 'They'll take you anywhere you want to go.' "

Meantime Milt continues to carry one arm in a cast as he visits regional stock auctions in search of still another bull.

A Ride with Marshall Ward

October 24, 1979

I played chauffeur for Marshall Ward last week and found the remuneration good.

He paid me off with an extended lecture on Appalachian folk history as we journeyed from Boone to Shelby and back.

In between he repeated a goodly portion of the lecture to the Cleveland County Historical Society and guests, most of it concerned with the history and nature of the Jack Tales.

Their reception was as favorable as mine. The young and old were mesmerized.

Marshall, a resident of Banner Elk, says that he has been telling Jack Tales for at least sixty-five years (he's now in his seventies) and enjoys the role of story-teller just as much as he did in his youth especially if there are children in the audience.

"If one youngun will show up to hear me, I'll tell him a story," he says. But he is happiest when he has a large audience of children. Often he will spend an entire day in a public school, visiting classroom after classroom and never seeming to tire.

The Jack Tales, he explains to his audiences, probably came to the Appalachians from Germany or Holland by way of England and are related to the folk stories told by the brothers Grimm.

Early settlers brought them to the Appalachians where they were passed down from generation to generation, especially in the more remote areas where entertainment had to be created at home.

Marshall credits his father with imbuing him with his zest for telling tales.

"My dad was the awfulest story-teller you ever heard of. If I could ever get him started, I knew he wouldn't quit till midnight. Sometimes my brothers would go to sleep on him and he'd have to carry them off to bed. Not me. I'd still be askin' for more to the very end."

His father, it turned out, had been similarly entranced by his great-great uncle, Counce Harmon, who passed on an extensive repertoire of stories.

Today Marshall lists twenty-five Jack Tales which he tells with some regularity, basing his selections on the audience and, occasionally, the season.

In Shelby, the date being near to Halloween, his choice was witch tales, the major selection called *Sop Doll*. In this story, Jack, as the operator of a grist mill, overcomes the efforts of witches (disguised as black cats) to poison him by plunging their paws into his gravy.

Marshall gives collector Richard Chase credit for helping to preserve the Jack Tales. "If it hadn't been for Mr. Chase taking an interest in me and the stories, I guess I wouldn't be telling them today."

The interest came when Chase, in search of mountain ballads, came to Appalachian State Teachers College in 1935 to ask students and teachers for help. "When he was through," says Marshall, "I went up to him and said, 'Mr. Chase, I don't know any old ballads and old songs like you were talking about, but I do know a lot of old stories. If you are interested and can get me some children to tell them to, I'll do some of them for you.' "

The result was the eventual publication of *The Jack Tales*, the majority of the stories being contributed by Marshall Ward.

The tales are delightful when read; they are absolutely spellbinding from the mouth of a master story-teller. Marshall Ward is such a teller.

A Ghost Tale Explained

January 16, 1980

Ghost stories abound in Appalachia. Many have been created in earlier times as a means of entertainment by naturally skilled story tellers.

Some are the result of the peculiar emotional state of the teller at the time he or she witnessed the apparition. Others came about through misapprehension of natural events.

One of my favorite stories of the latter type is told by Sue Taylor Murry of Valle Crucis, who was convinced for several years that she had, indeed, seen a ghost.

"Back in the twenties," she says, "my family owned a two-seated T-Model car which served as public transportation for young folks in the valley. Anytime things were dull in Valle Crucis, we'd load up the old car and head for Boone to see a movie or to visit friends.

"One night just after supper a group of us decided to take in the movie so we crowded into the touring car and were on our way. T-Models at this time used almost as much water as they did gas so it didn't surprise us to see steam begin boiling out of the radiator. Since this frequently happened we always kept a bucket in the car which we would use to bring water from the nearest well, spring, or creek.

"At this time the road ran parallel to Dutch Creek so we were soon in sight of a low-water bridge. I drove the car down toward the bridge and asked one of the male members of the party to take the bucket and bring some water while I kept the motor running.

"Just as he started toward the creek with the bucket, I thought I saw the head and shoulders of some strange creature appear over the upper edge of the bridge. Its face looked like a gorilla's with a huge mouth, flaring nostrils, and close-cropped hair.

"In a moment it again came into view, its eyes peering around the top of the bridge. I was so terrified that I couldn't utter a sound. A cold chill swept through my body and I felt as if my hair was standing on end.

"Without a word I rammed the gear into reverse and backed toward the highway. The boy with the water dropped the bucket and tumbled into the back seat as I headed for home.

"The other passengers had not seen the creature and they yelled question after question at me as we drove at full speed down the road. I still was so frightened that I couldn't answer.

"Finally we drew up in our front yard and I was able to blurt out what I had seen. By this time my passengers were almost as scared as I was.

"Of course, my parents pooh-poohed the idea that I had seen a monster, telling me that it was only my imagination at work, agitated by the rising mist from the waters of the creek. Nevertheless, for the next several years I never passed that bridge without a cold chill climbing up my spine, and there were others in the valley who were just as scared.

"Eventually, however, there came a logical explanation for what I thought I had seen. A Valle Crucis resident who liked to fish with minnows admitted that he had been seining above the bridge that night. He knew this was against the law, and he ducked out of sight when we drove up, thinking we were the game warden. From time to time he would raise his head above the level of the bridge to see whether he should make a run for it or stay hidden under the bridge.

"His boney face, large nose, and receding hairline, caught in the glare of my headlights through the mist, made him look like some hideous, ape-like monster.

"In the daytime his explanation was logical enough to allay my fears, but even now when I drive past that bridge after dark I half expect to see that ugly face caught in my headlights."

Ghost Tale Response

January 29, 1980

One good ghost story deserves another.

Recently Sue Taylor Murry of Valle Crucis told of a spine-tingling experience of her youth when a gruesome monster turned out to be a valley fisherman doing a bit of illegal seining by night. Her story brought a ghostly account by Troy Edwards of Elkin of what he conceived to be a supernatural being in Carrol County, Virginia. He writes:

"I had walked to church one night up in Lambsburg. I had to pass a graveyard going and coming from church. There used to be a big oak tree on the bank of the road where the graveyard was.

"The saying was that someone hung a man from the limb of that giant oak. But it never bothered me. In fact, I never thought about it. I never was afraid to walk by there until I saw what I saw.

"One night I left church around 11:30 p.m. It was a thirty-minute walk to the graveyard, making the time about midnight. I was alone—I lived on the other side of the graveyard only a little ways, about a fifteen-minute walk from the graveyard on home.

"I was walking along thinking about how happy the people were I left at church. It was a dark night and I never carried a light. I was paying no attention to where I was at. All of a sudden I had a chill to go from my head all the way down my back.

"I stopped and looked and what I saw made me feel like my hair stood straight up on my head. There in front of me was something white. It looked to be around six feet tall and shaped like a human being. Where its eyes should have been there was bright red things the size of eyes, but they glowed like fire coals on a dark night. So I thought someone's trying to scare me—I'll fix them.

"So I felt around and found me five good rocks. The ghost was still standing there, red eyes and all. I threw my first rock and saw it go through the white thing. I threw another at the red eyes and saw it go through them. Then I threw two more. The same thing.

"I threw my last rock through it and it still stood there, so I turned around and ran back to a neighbor's house and spent the night—I couldn't pass that thing and go on home.

"The next morning I went to where I saw it. There was nothing white around there anywhere. I could find no tracks or anything so to my opinion it had to be a ghost.

"I am married now and have a wife and two children. So I talked my wife and family into going with me up there to the graveyard one night around twelve p.m. So we drove up there and parked about a three-minute walk from the graveyard.

"I took a powerful light that night for I wanted to make sure we could all see. I got out of the car and started walking toward the graveyard. All of a sudden my wife and I and my boy heard someone walking on gravel.

"I thought, well, we will see who this is. It sounded like a heavy person so I shined my light all around, but there was no one. But the crunching steps kept getting closer coming toward us.

"I got back in the car, turned on the headlights, and still couldn't see anything. The sound of the crunching walking-on-gravel got so

close to the car I was afraid it would open the car door any minute. So we cranked up and left without seeing a soul, either with my headlights or flashlight.

"One more thing—the road was a hard surface. There was no gravel to crunch under anyone's feet.

"I only know I will never go up there by myself again because I feel there really is a ghost up there.

"Everything I have written is true. It really happened. There's no other explanation."

Coffee Lore

February 20, 1981

Customs have a habit of fading away, sometimes almost unnoticed until we wake up to find them gone.

I was reminded of this fact recently when a reader, King Sturgill, Jr., of Bristol, Tennessee, sent along a bit of doggerel called saucering practices of his youth. He writes:

"You know years ago when I was small most everyone drank their coffee from a saucer. They would pour it in the saucer to cool before drinking it. No one does that anymore. I guess it is just one more change in our way of life.

"Years ago," says Mr. Sturgill, "when I was just a little boy I stayed with my Uncle Cowan and Aunt Betty. My uncle was so nervous he could not hold his saucer to drink his coffee. Aunt Betty would pour it in the saucer and hold it for him to drink."

Mention of this coffee-drinking practice to a friend, Bert Price of the Reading Department at Appalachian State, brought an Eleanor Roosevelt story which he recalls from his own youthful days in Kentucky.

Readers will recall that Mrs. Roosevelt in her day exercised her peripatetic propensities even more frequently than does Mrs. Jimmy Carter at the present time.

Bert's story has it that Mrs. Roosevelt, on a swing through the South, stopped off in a small Kentucky town and entered the nearest greasy spoon in search of a cup of coffee.

"May I please have a cup of coffee?" she asked the counterman, and he immediately slid a cup of steaming brew in front of her.

She lifted the cup to her lips and hastily took it away.

"My," she said, "you certainly serve a hot cup of coffee, I'm not sure it's going to cool sufficiently for me to drink it before I have to leave with my party."

An obliging native son seated at the end of the counter spoke up: "Excuse me, ma'am, but since you're in such a allfard hurry I'd be right proud to trade with you. Mine's already been sassered and blowed."

Mrs. Roosevelt's response was not given, but I recently tried the Kentucky man's notion of properly prepared drinking coffee on an Appalachian colleague.

As he drew a cup of brew from the departmental pot, he turned politely to ask if I would like a cup.

"Only if it's already sassered and blowed," I replied.

He still looks at me strangely.

It has been interesting, incidentally, to pursue memories of the saucering technique itself.

Apparently the favorite method for the coffee imbibor who preferred the direct approach was to pour the saucer almost to the brim, blow a couple of firm but not overly violent breaths, over the liquid, grasp the saucer with both hands and bring it to a proper drinking level. Very effective though not long on manners.

A more delicate technique was to pour only a small amount of coffee into the saucer and blow several dainty breaths over the surface.

When the coffee was of a proper drinking temperature, it was brought to drinking position by the user as he or she placed the forefinger of only one hand over the edge of the saucer and provided support with the thumb, and third and fourth fingers.

The little finger, or pinkie, was gracefully extended to comply with the exacting demands of contemporary etiquette.

Perhaps this technique in itself was enough to bring on the saucerless coffee mug!

Baby-Marking

February 27, 1980

Some weeks ago *Folk-Ways* featured several reader responses concerning the folk belief of "marking" babies, the tradition holding that expectant mothers may unwittingly, through sudden fright or intense desire for food, cause their offspring to carry a birthmark.

Opinions differed, some sticking firmly by this traditional mountain belief and others dismissing it as more superstition.

A recent letter from Mrs. Bessie Eldreth, a Watauga County native, places her strongly in the believers' corner.

She writes:

"I have heard a few doctors say that there is no way you can mark a child while carrying a baby, but I say through early pregnancy you can mark a child.

"I'm not disputing the doctors' word, but I have been at homes when babies were born and have been a midwife in emergency cases.

"I know a woman," says Mrs. Eldreth, "who had a pet groundhog. She cherished the groundhog and let it climb up on her shoulders and petted it just like you would a child. When her child was born, it was so much like a groundhog that no one was allowed to see the baby. I know because I was there—the baby died at birth."

Mrs. Eldreth also cites a marking which she says was brought about by an expectant mother's watching a squirrel at play.

"I knew a lady who sat under a hickory nut tree and watched a squirrel play at a time when she was early in her pregnancy. The squirrel would leap from limb to limb and collect hickory nuts, hold them in its paws, and eat them. When her child was born, it had funny paws like a squirrel. She also had a slim face and funny long teeth and she would jump and cheep just like a squirrel. My Mama took me to see her when I was a little girl and I was so scared of her that I didn't know what to do. If she got hold of you she would bite, pinch and scratch you."

Mrs. Eldreth also recalls a pregnant woman's experience of crossing a field and being chased by a ram.

"One day my mama took me to visit a neighbor. This lady was going through a field and she was in her early pregnancy and a fighting sheep got after her. In about seven months her baby was born and all of his fingers were growed together as well as his toes. His face was so bad it would scare you to look at it. His nose was just flat on his face—just two holes for a nose and he breathed just like he was smothering something awful. After I saw the boy and found that he was kind and gentle, us children would play with him. He lived to be a grown man but was hardly what anyone could call a human being."

Mrs. Eldreth also recounts a marking by a hog.

"I knew a doctor who had a daughter that had twin babies and one was so badly marked by a hog until she [the mother] wouldn't let anyone see the baby until it was old enough to have plastic surgery."

Mrs. Eldreth continues to believe so strongly in marking that she warns the young of this danger. "If any young girls get pregnant," she says, "please don't ever watch a snake or fish swim in the water or you are apt to have a wiggling baby. I know because I have been there."

Wood Lore

March 26, 1981

Spring may have served calendar notice of its arrival, but mountain folk aren't altogether convinced that it's here.

As a matter of fact, the extended cold, accompanied by a recent twenty-inch snow, has exhausted wood supplies and sent homeowners scrounging about for any kind of combustible material for stove or fireplace.

And in the process some of the firetenders are letting themselves in for deep trouble. Not just an overload of soot and creosote, the old-timers say, but a mess of bad luck brought on by burning unlucky wood.

Like sassafras, for instance, which pops and crackles in protest when laid on the fire, sending sparks and coals into the floor. But so does chestnut and no one seems to label it as unlucky.

Perhaps it is the turning of a traditional mountain medicine wood into a mere source of heat. Whatever the reason, the tradition-minded firemaker by-passes sassafras for his fire.

Ned Austen, a Watauga County native and a woodstove advocate, doesn't take a stand on the use of sassafras, but he reports that some of his neighbors do—especially after a molasses-making incident several years ago.

In gathering wood to heat the molasses boiler, one of the neighbors threw in a few chunks of sassafras. Another of the wood-gatherers objected strongly to its use as it was tossed on the flames. "You watch," he said. "Somebody's asking for bad luck—and soon!"

Soon came that night when the sassafras gatherer's wife, mistaking a can of gasoline for a container of kerosene, laced the burning stove coals with the liquid. Result: an exploding stove, a destroyed home, two members of the family dead, and "proof positive" that it was the unlucky sassafras which caused the tragedy. Similar instances are cited throughout the Appalachians.

Then there is dogwood. Though it is considered fairly efficient as fuel, many mountain folk pass it by. Its four-leafed blossom reminds them of the cross, and they choose not to use the wood lest it bring misfortune.

By the same token they eschew the elder. They believe that the cross was constructed from this wood and that to burn it is to risk the chance of raising Satan.

Apple wood, though it burns well and produces a pleasant odor, is another fuel which many mountain folk use only in dire necessity.

It, too, reminds them of the devil and the role of the apple tree in the Garden of Eden.

Russell Watson, another Watauga County resident, recalls that a neighbor confirmed this fact several years ago while on a wood gathering expedition.

"The man had a whole hillside of apple trees that were either dead or otherwise not producing," says Russell, "and I asked him why he didn't cut them down for firewood instead of having to go some distance into the woods."

" 'Lord a-mercy,' the man replied. 'If I was to throw a single piece of apple wood on the fire, my wife would go into a conniption fit. She believes that the first puff of apple wood smoke will bring up the devil! ' "

Readers who know of other "bad luck" trees are invited to share their knowledge.

John Joines of Wilkes County

April 1, 1981

It's good to find that the oral storytellers are beginning to have their day.

For many years restricted to the limited audience of fellow whittlers and tale spinners gathered around potbellied stoves in country stores across the land, they have now emerged as a new class of public entertainers.

Essentially amateurs—though some now receive more or less token fees—they have been embraced by college and university groups, public school classes, and civic organizations.

Many of them have been recorded on both oral and video tapes, and their reputations have spread far beyond their own stamping grounds.

A new face, however, to Boone and environs is that of John Joines. A resident of the Poer's Knob Community in Wilkes County, he is widely known in the foothills and downstate for his unending supply of tall tales (outright lies he calls them), dog stories, and unclassified anecdotes; but few Watauga County folklore addicts knew him prior to his recent appearance on the Appalachian campus.

A first cousin to the late Robert Frost in physical appearance, the ruddy-faced, white-thatched Joines last week sat in an easy rocker before a university-community audience and spun tale after tale for over an hour, one story leading naturally to the next.

Dog stories predominated, especially those involving bird dogs, many of them hoary with age but made new in Joines' telling.

Audience favorite for the evening was his story of the hunting dog who each day brought in game of an appropriate size to fit the hide-tanning inclinations of his master.

According to Joines' version, the owner had a variety of flat boards on hand to which he attached the hides of game animals for drying prior to taking them to market.

Whenever the owner fancied the pelt of a particular animal—beaver, muskrat, possum, fox, or other—he simply chose a tanning board of proper size and leaned it against the side of the barn.

As soon as the dog spotted the board, he was off in a lope to fulfill his master's needs. Usually he was back in a short time, dragging his quarry in by the scuff of the neck.

His reputation spread far and wide.

But his fame, unfortunately, made him take his work too seriously.

One morning the owner's wife found that the folding mechanism on her ironing board was in need of attention, so she set the board against the barn for the husband to repair.

Soon the dog came shuffling by to check out his assignment for the day.

Mistaking the ironing board for a tanning board, he fell back on his haunches in dismay.

But loyal and true, he scrambled to his feet and loped off into the woods, his eyes still showing bewilderment but his jaw set in determination.

Nobody has seen him since that day.

N.C. Folklore Society
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Appalachian State University
Boone, N.C. 28608

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NORTH CAROLINA FOLKLORE JOURNAL

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VOL. 29, NO. 2

FALL-WINTER 1981

NORTH CAROLINA FOLKLORE JOURNAL

THOMAS McGOWAN, editor

BLAIR HANCOCK, KATHY HOWELL, and BLAKE LAMBERT,
editorial assistants

The *North Carolina Folklore Journal* is published twice a year by the North Carolina Folklore Society with the assistance of Appalachian State University. Memberships in the Society, which include subscriptions to the *Journal* and the quarterly *Newsletter of the North Carolina Folklore Society*, are \$150 for life members, \$4 per year for individuals, and \$6 for institutional and library members. Membership dues should be mailed to the North Carolina Folklore Society, c/o Department of English, Appalachian State University, Boone, NC 28608.

Assorted past issues of the *North Carolina Folklore Journal* are available at \$2 each. North Carolina residents should add 8% sales tax for each back issue ordered.

The *North Carolina Folklore Journal* publishes studies of North Carolina folklore and folklife, analyses of the use of folklore in literature, and articles whose rigorous methodology or innovative approach is pertinent to local folkloristics. Manuscripts should conform to the *MLA Handbook*. Quotations from oral narratives should be transcriptions of spoken texts and should be identified by teller, place, and date.



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NORTH CAROLINA FOLKLORE JOURNAL

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Cover: Ann Williams weaves the Alexander Family "Kentucky Beauty" on the loom at the Hezekiah Alexander Homesite in Charlotte.



North Carolina State University Humanities Foundation, Inc.

North Carolina State University / Post Office Box 5067 / Raleigh 27650 / 919-737-2846

January 25, 1982

Mr. Thomas McGowan
N. C. Folklore Journal
English Department
ASU
Boone, NC 28607

Dear Thomas:

At the July gathering of the North Carolina Writers Conference it was announced that a Guy Owen Memorial Fund was being established in the North Carolina State University Humanities Foundation. One of the first objectives of this fund was to provide for the publication of Guy's last collection of short stories. The UNC Press has tentatively agreed to publish the volume, but requests a subsidy of \$5,000.

The Fund now has in hand \$3,116, and I am writing members of the Writers Conference in hopes of raising the balance of the funds required. Any contribution will be greatly appreciated.

Checks should be made payable to the NCSU Humanities Foundation for the Guy Owen Memorial Fund and mailed to Box 5067, Raleigh, NC 27650.

With many thanks and best wishes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sam Ragan".

Sam Ragan, Director
N. C. State University
Humanities Foundation

SR:ed

Guy and Folklore

by Richard Walser

Guy Owen (1925-1981) was a whole lot of different people—poet, lecturer, novelist, teacher, and so on—but underneath each of his hats was also the folklorist, solid and unchanging. Folklore permeated his short stories and humorous sketches and novels.

He was born and brought up in Elkton (he called it Ellers Bend) in Bladen County (his name was Cape Fear County). As a boy, he went along with his Grandfather Elkins to the gristmill and the blacksmith shop. He knew first-hand, he later wrote, about “corn shuckings and peanut poppings and cane grindings and candy pullings.” Early on, he clerked in crossroads country stores owned by his father and his cousin—and there he got an education in folk knowledge and folkways.

It was a masculine world. As the farmers and workers gathered around the stove on winter days or sat outside on the wooden steps drinking soda pop in summertime, Guy heard yarns about coonhunters, about moonshiners and bootleggers, about folks who outwit the law (his Flim-Flam Man was one of these), about pinhookers at tobacco auctions. He learned about ghosts who scared the liverlights out of you, and from the blacks he picked up some pointers on “conjuring powders” and love potions.

The best times came when some old fellow with a vivid imagination started a Lying Contest. Oh, the whoppers they told! Guy perched himself up on the store counter or lolled far back on the porch bench, and he listened. He never forgot any of it.

And he loved folk talk. Forever in his memory were such sayings as “I felt lower than a snake with the toothache,” “It’s better to wear out than to drop out,” “It was so quiet you could hear a cricket clear his throat,” “He looked as sour as owl droppings.”

Richard Walser was editing partner with Guy Owen during part of the North Carolina Folklore Journal’s life at North Carolina State University. Professor of English Emeritus and author of numerous publications on Tarheel folklore and literature, Dick’s most recent publication is North Carolina Legends, a fine collection of folk narratives.

When he began to write, he used it all, and twice in *North Carolina Folklore* (1965, 1971) he explained how valuable these experiences were. He used folklore in his fiction because it lent "a sense of the past" and provided "a sense of continuity." Guy's characters always had parents and grandparents and a lot of ancestors.

He was a Working Folklorist. He used not only what he remembered from his boyhood, but he searched out other sources. Always at hand was a pad where he wrote down examples of folk speech: "thunderation," "white mule" (homemade liquor), "traipse," "hellacious." Again and again he went through the seven-volume *Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore* looking for proverbs, ballads, or whatever. From the *Journal* he rejoiced in those lists of superstitions the contributors sent in. Once he attended a tent revival in Wilkes County (he had been brought up a non-shouting Bladen County Presbyterian) to get the "feel" of the occasion. For publication he wrote articles like "Folk Motifs in Erskine Caldwell's Cyclorama of the South" and "Tar Heel Words: Firsts and Fossils."

He was a Working Folklorist. He was active in the North Carolina Folklore Society and for seven years co-editor of its publication. He was vice president of the Society in 1966 when it seemed that the organization was going to fold up. Arthur Palmer Hudson, as secretary-treasurer-editor, had guided the Society from Chapel Hill for more than twenty years. When he announced that he must retire, no one among his University colleagues was willing to take on the job permanently. A meeting of Society officers and friends was called at Chapel Hill for the purpose of attending the funeral of the second oldest cultural organization in North Carolina. Guy was there, along with several others from Raleigh. "No, let's don't bury it yet," he said. "Let me see what we can do over at N.C. State." The very life of the Society depended on the continuation of its publication.

No periodical such as a folklore journal can exist without financial and secretarial assistance, be it academic or otherwise. Guy returned to Raleigh and discussed the matter with Dr. Lodwick Hartley, then head of the Department of English, who was immediately and enthusiastically supportive. A young lady was assigned part-time to keep the simple records and type material to be sent off to the print shop, small donations came from the dean when needed, and once more the Society and its little magazine began to thrive. As co-editor, Guy didn't bother with production and business matters; he was our idea man, our field laborer, our solicitor. Pretty soon he had the best writers from all over North Carolina sending us articles on folklore.

Apparent in 1971 was that Dr. Harley's successor was completely unsympathetic to the *North Carolina Folklore Journal* and to the *Southern Poetry Review*, Guy's other publication. Gradually he began

to choke them to extinction. First, secretarial help was sharply curtailed; finally orders went out that no departmental typist could in any way use office hours on matters pertaining to the two periodicals. Early in 1973 Guy resigned as co-editor of the *Journal* to devote his efforts to the survival of the *Review*. Under the preceding administration it had been affirmed that both publications were appropriate activities of a Land Grant (i.e., a people's) institution. That policy was reversed. After several years of hopeless struggle, the *Journal* was transferred in 1977 to Appalachian State University at Boone, and the *Review* in 1978 to the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. The two are nowadays doing quite well, thank you. Guy Owen, that miracle man on so many scores, was unable to overcome an antagonistic department head who had only the very dimmest conception of a Land Grant university's mission and obligations to its state.

This sad little story of a tough period in the life of a Working Folklorist is narrated here as a salute to Guy Owen, who saved the Society in 1966 and who saw it off to "pastures new" in 1977. Guy too is now gone from N.C. State, and N.C. State has nothing to replace him or the things he did. What remains in Raleigh and throughout and beyond North Carolina are those human, fun-loving, folkloric books of his. They live on.

The Alexander Family “Kentucky Beauty”: The Unraveling of a Coverlet Draft

by Ann Williams

I am a weaver and work as a volunteer at the Hezekiah Alexander Homesite, a restored eighteenth-century stone house in Mecklenburg County. The Hezekiah Alexander Homesite is maintained by the Mint Museum of History to preserve a bit of our past and acquaint the public with local history and colonial folkways. I work with several other weavers to produce traditional patterns on an eighteenth-century loom. We also demonstrate spinning and explain household textile production from the shearing of sheep and harvesting of flax to the finished cloth.

A little over a year ago the museum curator brought to our attention a yellowed scrap of paper covered with brownish hash marks. It was a weaving draft from the Alexander Family papers entitled “Kentucky Beauty” and dated March 1868 (see Figure 1). The format was totally different from modern notation and seemed indecipherable. I consulted several books and found some brief mention of old drafting styles, but nothing resembling our pattern; nor could I find a pattern named “Kentucky Beauty.” Prior to modern times there was many ways of writing patterns which at first glance bear little resemblance to present forms of notation or to each other. I was unable to break the code contained in our mysterious scrap of paper. If the hash marks indicated the sequence of threading the harnesses, then the pattern would not “tabby,” and a tabby (plain weave) is necessary in overshot weaving. It occurred to me that it might be a draft or profile draft for some weaving system other than overshot. Fortunately this proved not to be the case, or my task might have been much more difficult.

The four harness overshot weave is a system of pattern weaving used primarily for coverlets in the United States and Canada during the last quarter of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries. The origins of overshot are obscure. Presumably our ancestors brought

Ann Williams is a docent at the Mint Museum of History in Charlotte, N.C.

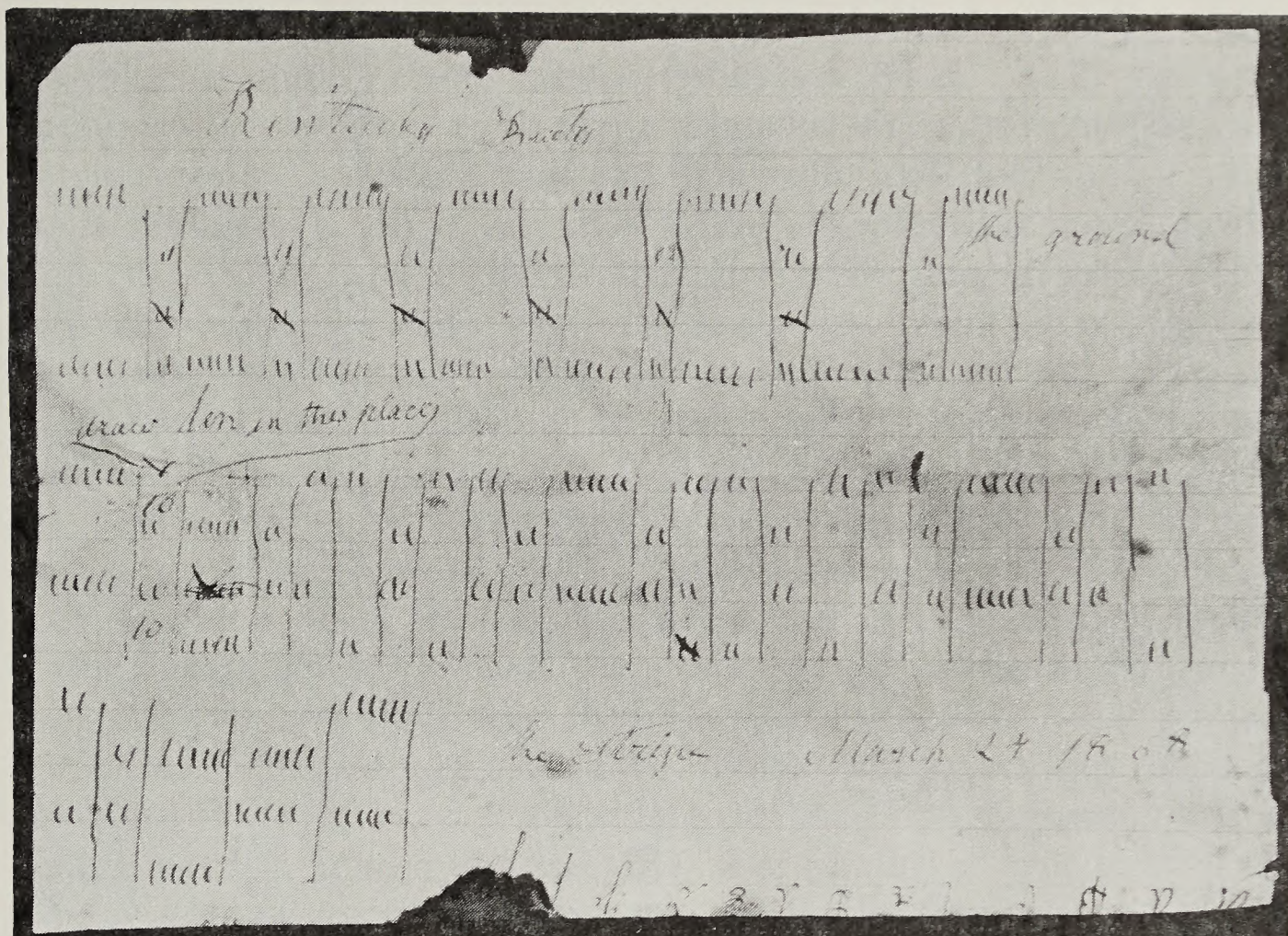


Fig. 1. "Kentucky Beauty" draft from Alexander family papers. Mint Museum of History, Charlotte, N.C.

with them the foundations from various European countries, especially Scotland. But the full flowering and development of this weaving method took place on these shores making it an American folk art.

The patterns are formed in the following manner. The warp threads (lengthwise threads in the fabric) are threaded one by one through the harnesses of the loom; each warp is threaded through a string or wire loop on one of the four harnesses. The pattern or draft is the written record of this threading sequence. The harnesses are attached to foot treadles; when two treadles are depressed the two harnesses attached to them are lowered and the other two harnesses (balanced on rollers) rise. Consequently the warp threads move with their harnesses forming a wedge shaped "shed" through which the shuttle carrying the weft thread is thrown. On a four harness loom there are six possible sheds formed by different combinations of two harnesses up and two harnesses down. The harnesses are usually numbered 1, 2, 3, and 4, with number 1 being closest to the weaver. The possible sheds are:

	A	B	C	D	a	b
Down	1&2	2&3	3&4	1&4	1&3	2&4
Up	3&4	1&4	1&2	2&3	2&4	1&3

Overshot is threaded so that two of these combinations produce plain weave or tabby. Usually the tabby is threaded on the 1&3 and 2&4 sheds (a&b). This is accomplished by having adjacent threads brought

through even and odd numbered harnesses alternately. The other four sheds (A, B, C, & D) are called pattern sheds. When treadles are depressed to produce these combinations the warp threads rise and fall in groups (rather than alternately) so that blocks of pattern may be woven. Two shuttles for the weft, the thread carried by the shuttle, are used; one for the pattern weft of wool, usually in a bright or dark color, and one for the tabby weft which is usually white linen or cotton—the same thread as the warp. The shuttle carrying the tabby weft is thrown alternately through the two tabby sheds producing a plain weave or foundation fabric. The pattern weft is woven in one of the pattern sheds following each shot of tabby. This causes the pattern to be interwoven within the foundation fabric. The pattern weft floats over the groups of threads in the pattern shed, hence the name, overshot. (See Figure 2 and cover.) The treadling sequence of these pattern shots is usually derived from the threading draft to produce a balanced or symmetrical appearance in the cloth. Instructions for treadling were often written “tomp as writ.” More complex patterns can be woven on looms with more than four harnesses. This was the province of the professional weaver and need not concern us here.

I had about given up on our mysterious little pattern, when one of our weavers, Mrs. Laura Hall, called me and said, “It came to me in the middle of the night; the tabby is worked on the 1&2 and 3&4 instead of the more usual 1&3, 2&4 method.” She was right; I have since discovered that old patterns were sometimes written in this way. Other combinations were also used; it was up to the weaver to know the code.

Overshot patterns are nearly always symmetrical or close enough to give the illusion of symmetry along both axes. Using this characteristic I determined that our pattern had been written from left to right rather than the more usual right to left direction. Also there appeared to be two blocks omitted between the second and third line. I added the appropriate threads at this point in order to balance the pattern in the stripe section. I interpreted the words “drawn ten in this place” to mean ‘twelve threads altogether, six on harness two and six on harness three.’ This was also done to preserve the symmetry. At this point I “drew down” the pattern on graph paper to test it out (Figure 3). The result was a pleasing arrangement of tables separated by stripes, and a figure emerged at the intersection of the stripes (Figure 4). A little experimentation proved I could transpose harness two and three so that the tabby occurred in its more familiar place. This did not alter the appearance of the cloth.

Now it was time to go back to the books to see if I could document the draft. I rewrote the draft in the more familiar notation of modern weavers in order to compare it to the literature. (Figure 5.) I found several patterns similar to ours, but none identical and still none named “Kentucky Beauty.”



Fig. 2. The shuttle carrying the pattern weft is being put into the shed.
Note the tabby shuttle on the breast beam in front of the weaver.

At this point we decided to weave the pattern into a coverlet. I planned the weaving: the number, shape, and size of the panels; the number of repeats in the length and width of each panel; the number of threads per inch in the warp and weft, and so on. I also added a border reflecting a portion of the stripe, computed the yarn requirements, and purchased the yarn—a natural linen for the warp and tabby weft, and an indigo wool for the pattern weft. Fortunately, I

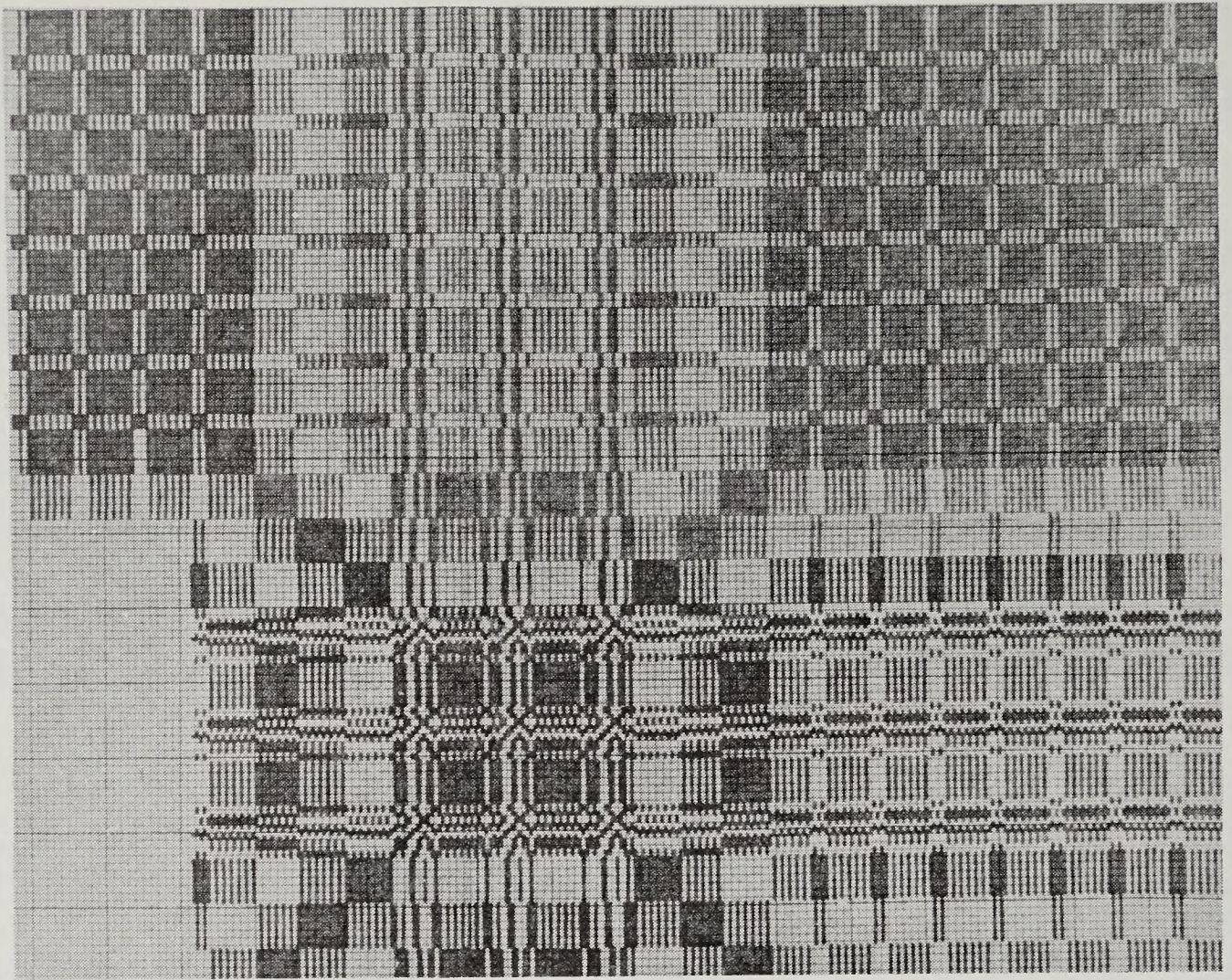


Fig. 3. Pattern of "Kentucky Beauty" drawn down on draft paper.

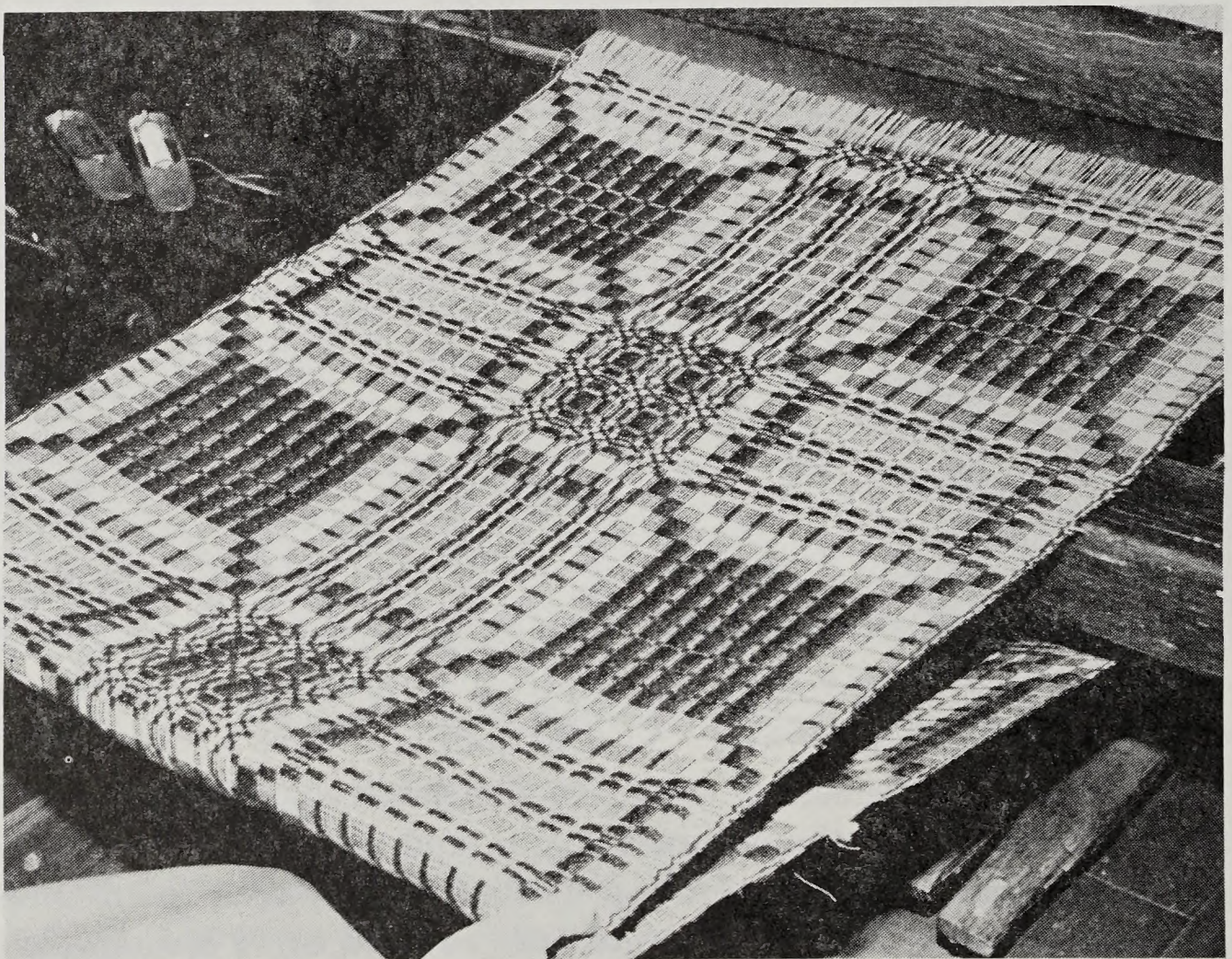


Fig. 4. "Kentucky Beauty" in cloth as it comes from the loom. The large squares are the tables; the area between them both vertically and horizontally is the stripes. The intersection of the stripes is the figure.

live in the twentieth century and had the help of a pocket calculator!

A group of us worked together dressing the loom. This is a tedious and exacting task, but not so complex as it appears. We set the warp at eighteen threads per inch, a rather coarse setting producing a table of nearly seven inches square and a stripe ten inches wide. This type of pattern was probably woven originally on much finer threads set at thirty to thirty-six per inch. I was afraid so delicate a warp might be difficult for us to handle. I worked out the treadling sequence, again making a few minor adjustments to preserve the illusion of symmetry. The pattern contains an even number of threads in each of its blocks, so it is not truly symmetrical. Now we were ready to begin weaving.

The pattern progressed nicely as cloth began to grow on the loom, but I still had some doubts about the judgments and interpretations I had made along the way. Then quite by chance I discovered an article by C. Bryn Pinchin.¹ She had done similar research on a collection of old weaving drafts. Her drafts had come to her through a friend in California and could be traced back through the family across the country and through the century to Jane Cox of Randolph County, North Carolina. One of the patterns dated 1845 was named "Kentucky Beauty." The article contained photographs, but not of this particular draft, so I wrote to Ms. Pinchin for more information. She was kind enough to send me some of the extra photostats in her collection; fortunately one of them was "Kentucky Beauty" (Figure 6). It was very similar to our pattern. The notation system was also quite similar; the "tabby" was written in the same unconventional manner. The corrections I had made were verified. The draft was nearly identical to the similar patterns with other names that I had found in books. I now felt sure that these were all variations on a single theme.

A few minor points tie up loose ends. The example in the Canadian book, *Keep Me Warm One Night* by Burnham and Burnham, calls this draft a variation of "Monmouth" (a name I haven't seen in American books) and associates it with areas of strong Scottish tradition.² This heritage fits in with the Alexander family as well as the settlers of the North Carolina Piedmont and the southern Appalachians. Mary Miegs Atwater in her book *The Shuttlecraft Book of American Handweaving*, which is the bible of traditional weaving patterns, lists the pattern as "Pine Burr" or "Pine Bloom."³ She called it a very popular pattern in the South, appearing in many variations and having a number of names. And coming full circle Edward F. Worst says of a similar draft in his book *Weaving with Foot-Power Looms*, "the Pine Cone Bloom is a favorite draft throughout the South, especially in Kentucky."⁴

There are still unanswered questions. Why, for example, are some of the markings on our yellowed scrap of paper crossed out? Had our weaver made a mistake in copying or was this a purposeful change in design. Another possible explanation is that she was familiar with the

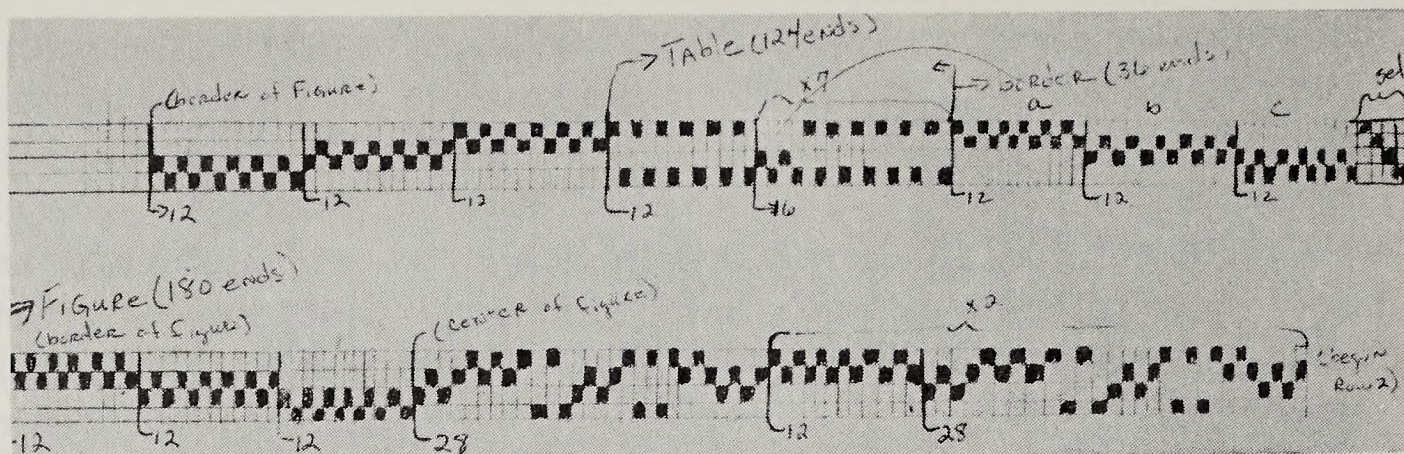


Fig. 5. Draft of "Kentucky Beauty" rewritten in conventional notation. Threading sequence for 500 ends; border, 36; table, 124; figure, 180; table, 124; border, 36 (reverse order of a, b, c border sections).

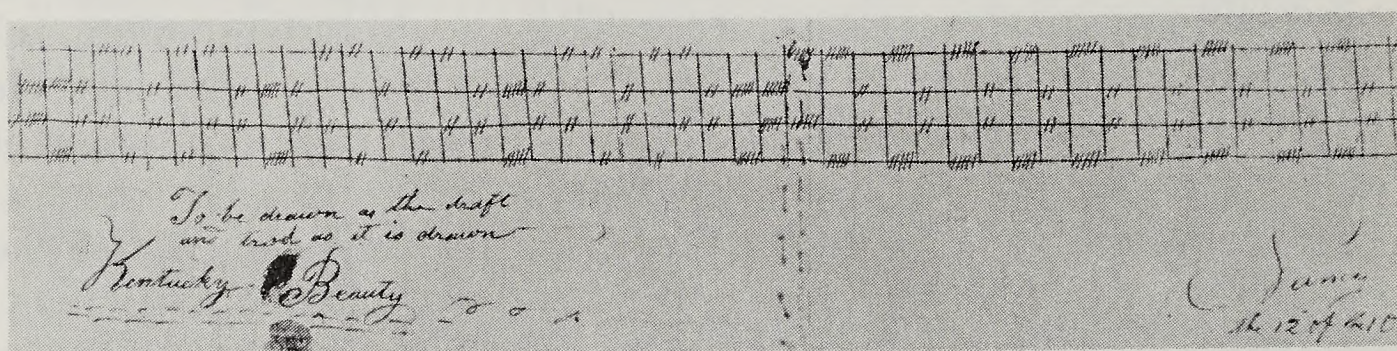


Fig. 6. "Kentucky Beauty" from Jane Cox Collection. Courtesy of C. Bryn Pinchin.

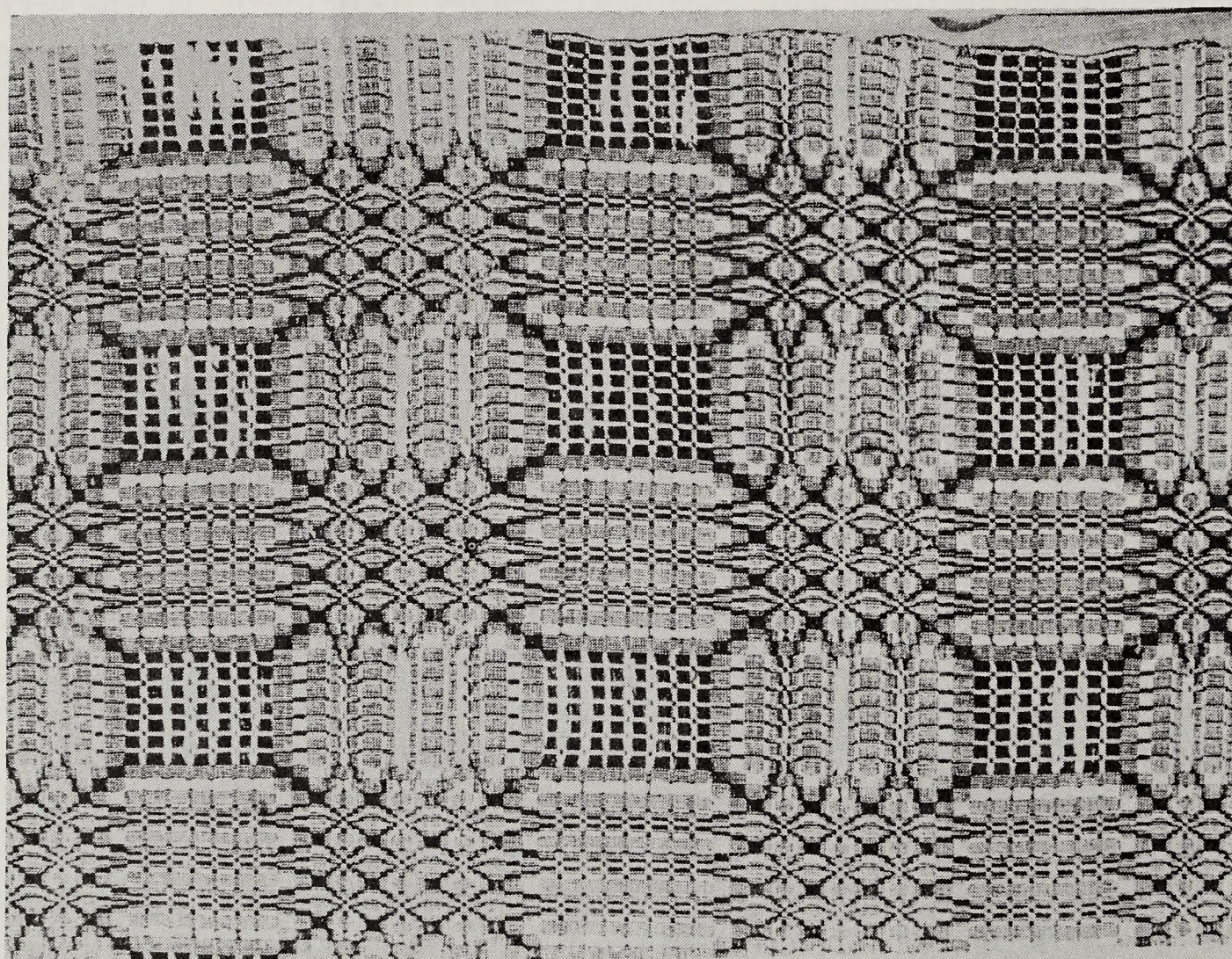


Fig. 7. Part of an old coverlet in the "Pine Bloom" pattern. Note the difference between this more traditional pattern and the Alexander Family "Kentucky Beauty."

basic "rules" of overshot draft writing, but not with some of the variations or exceptions to these rules. One of these variations is called "weaving on opposites." The draft of Jane Cox and the drafts in the texts I have reviewed all use this "opposites" system in the table area of the pattern. The crossed out marks eliminate the threads on opposites so that our pattern follows the more usual overshot method. In the figure portion of the draft there is another deviation from all of my other sources. Here I have no idea why such a change occurred. I have chosen to weave our coverlet incorporating these changes made by the nineteenth-century Alexander weaver; the effect is interesting and slightly unconventional.

The whole geometry of the figure is altered by these changes so that it is obviously different, even at a casual glance (Figure 7). Old patterns were copied and recopied by hand and passed from one person to another over a long number of years. Many errors undoubtedly occurred, but creative people must have made some deliberate changes. Innovation was not a usual part of eighteenth-century art forms, but gradual, well-thought-out changes made by experienced artisans must have contributed to the evolution of the many hundreds of patterns that developed in the overshot system. The household weavers of earlier centuries often worked in rural areas with limited resources. They had to substitute ingenuity for information. The large number of patterns and their many variations must have been in part the result of serendipity. I feel strongly that some of these happy accidents must have contributed to the uniqueness of our "Kentucky Beauty."

NOTES

1. C. Bryn Pinchin, "Jane Cox: Her Draft for Counterpins." *Interweave*, 4:3 (Summer 1979), 31-33.
2. Harold B. and Dorothy K. Burnham, *Keep Me Warm One Night* (Toronto: U. of Toronto Press, 1972), pp. 200 and 256-57.
3. Mary Meigs Atwater, *The Shuttle-Craft Book of American Handweaving* (New York: Macmillan, 1975), pp. 156 and 159.
4. Edward F. Worst, *Weaving with Foot-Power Looms* (New York: Dover, 1974), pp. 108-09.

The Root Doctors and the Courtroom

by Frank Schmallegger

As part of a project in a criminal justice class in 1980 at Pembroke State University, a group of students and I interviewed ten Lumbee conjurers in Robeson County about their practices. Although we had some difficulty in our interviewing, because these local "root doctors" were suspicious about our possible links with law enforcement agencies, we were able to discover some rather interesting information about the roles root doctors play in court cases.

Robeson County is a high crime area as rural counties go. Its 1978 crime rate of 3,852 major crimes per 100,000 citizens is much above other rural North Carolina counties such as Alleghany (227), Ashe (660), Clay (732), Graham (427), or Polk (830).¹ A subculture of violence, generated in part by continuing tension between the races, characterizes the area. However, most offenses are intra-racial, representing a tradition of personal vengeance combined with an extreme emphasis on "manliness."

Murder and assault are prevalent. The return of twenty-two death penalty convictions for first-degree murder in a two-year period led to the listing of Robeson County's district attorney in the 1978 *Guinness Book of World Records*. All told, the district attorney's office handled over 40,000 cases in 1978, ranging from traffic offenses to murder, a large number in a county of less than 90,000 people.

A high crime rate translates into many arrests and lots of defendants. Most people in trouble with the law won't leave a stone unturned. For defendants in Robeson County, root workers offer an opportunity for action which goes beyond legal defenses. Of course most defendants seek legal counsel as soon as possible, and none depend entirely or even primarily upon root workers, but some employ them because "it can't hurt and might do some good." All told, probably fewer than one out of every one hundred persons charged with a crime in the county hires a conjurer, but those that do support an interesting industry.

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Offenders usually initiate contact with a conjurer when out on bond. In cases where bail is high or has been denied, they may ask friends to make the needed arrangements. All conjurers claimed to be able to tell when a person seeking their help was guilty, but only two said they would not try to assist someone whose guilt was known.

The root worker needs information to act, but is not interested in legalities. The nature of the crime, strength of the evidence, co-conspirators, past record, and other technical details are irrelevant. The conjurer is not concerned with proving guilt or innocence, but works to influence the personalities involved in the case. He or she will want to know who significant witnesses are, who the judge will be, and in what courtroom the hearing or trial will be held. Once this is known he begins work and generally relies on one or more of the following techniques:

Rituals and Powders. In the belief that the outcome of any event can be influenced through ritual enactment, root workers will enter an empty courtroom before trial and invoke forces associated with the four cardinal directions, beseeching them to insure a successful resolution of the real-life drama about to occur. The process involves sprinkling dust over the courtroom, especially the judge's bench and jury box. The area touched by the dust is believed to come under the conjurer's control. A fine degree of grinding seems more important than the substance from which the dust is made. One root worker told of buying his dust from cosmetics counters and wig shops.

Courtroom dusting appears to have been considerably more popular twenty years ago. It is unlikely that the modern courtrooms of the new Robeson County Courthouse, because of their close proximity to the Sheriff's Department, receive very much in the way of conjurer's dust although there is some evidence of dusting these courtrooms today.² However, outlying courtrooms, sometimes housed in former churches, bank buildings, and the like, are much less closely supervised and are used infrequently. As such, they are more accessible to the conjurer. Some residents of the town of Pembroke, the population center of the Lumbees in Robeson County, told me I could walk into the local district courtroom at any time and see the dust of conjurers. My inspection of that courtroom showed it to be as dusty as any other makeshift county court.

Spells. Perhaps the most common form of assistance the root worker offers are spells concocted to influence the prosecutor, judge, and jury in a way favorable to the defendant. At best, it is hoped the prosecutor will be ineffective and the jury opposed to him from the start. Prayer, concentration, rituals, and even fasting are used to invoke the required spell.

Roots. The roots of various plants are recommended as good luck charms, used to ward off evil and disease, and to bring happiness. Roots must be carried or worn on the body to be effective.

The extension of such thinking naturally leads to the presence of roots in the courtroom. One root worker told of secreting roots in the toe of her shoe and shaking her foot at the judge during a trial. Her client carried a bundle of roots, but indications were that they were sassafras. Although her client was convicted, she claimed that the judge fined him a much lower amount than would have been the case without her assistance.

The Evil Eye. The special status granted conjurers in the community invests their mere presence, and even their gaze, with awe. Although usually an expensive alternative because it is time-consuming, hiring a root worker to attend one's trial and work the "evil eye" on the judge, and damaging witnesses, is thought to be most effective.

Few conjurers frequent courtrooms when trials are in progress, but when they do, they sit rigidly and fix their gaze upon each individual involved in the proceedings. No doubt such stares can effectively unnerve superstitious witnesses.

Earth. The "dirt from a person's tracks" is important to root workers, who believe that ground absorbs something of the personal qualities of those who walk upon it. This "personal essence," which remains behind, can be manipulated in order to re-direct the psychic course of the walker. Sometimes the ground itself will be carried in a small cloth bag and squeezed or fingered when in the presence of the person who is to be influenced. One root worker we spoke with told of her attempts to defuse the potentially damaging testimony of a prosecution witness by praying over dirt scraped from his tracks; having first boiled it to remove any "psychic resistance."

Even with these many techniques at his disposal, the root worker, like a defense lawyer, can't guarantee success. When failure occurs it may become difficult for the root worker to collect the agreed-upon fee. To circumvent this problem, payment is sometimes required in advance. After the fact, a client may be threatened with magical vengeance, although threats carry little weight once the client has "lost faith" in the root worker's abilities.

To legitimate failure and to prevent a loss of faith among both past and potential clients, root workers invoke two explanations: 1. Faith is paramount. Unless the client believes in the root worker's powers, nothing can be done to help. 2. The client must follow instructions to the letter. If a root worker tells a client to carry a bag of roots into the courtroom, shake them at the judge, and think constantly of freedom, while sentence is being passed, the defendant can later be faulted for not performing adequately.

Throughout human history magic has provided its adherents with a sense of control over otherwise seemingly capricious lives. More than half a century ago Bronislaw Malinowski delineated the limits of magical practice, finding it prevalent only under conditions where technology and practical knowledge were inadequate to insure the success of important ventures.

Root working among the Lumbee survives as a magical tradition in a predominately secular age. Its continued existence appears facilitated by low educational levels and a cultural heritage rich in magical beliefs and practices. The future, however, is uncertain. Modernity, characterized by an empirical approach, inherent rationality, and a scientific perspective, is fast encroaching upon Lumbee traditions. Its advance may soon eclipse the mystical world view from which root working derives.

On the other hand, Western civilization is no stranger to the magical attitude. Modern American culture continues to be enchanted by occult practices. Perhaps coming changes in Robeson County will accomodate a continuation of the root working tradition.

NOTES

1. *Crime in North Carolina*, 1978 Uniform Crime Report of the North Carolina Department of Justice, Raleigh.

2. Bonnie Jordan, "Court House Workers Steer Clear of 'Goofer Dust,'" *The Robesonian*, 16 August 1979, p. 9.

3. Bernard Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1932).

Folklore Sampler

This section includes discussions of North Carolina folklore that do not fit our usual article format. The editor invites readers to contribute local folklore they have collected.

North Carolina Madstones: A Second and Final Supplement

by Joseph D. Clark

These listings are meant to supplement my monograph, *Madstones*, *NCFJ*, 24:1 (March 1976), and additions to it in *NCFJ*, 25:1 (May 1977), 33-35. I have received all of this new material through the newspaper research of T. H. Macintosh of Elon College, N.C.

55. *Pointer (Joseph) Madstone*. See *NCFJ*, 24:1, #1.

Owner: Pointer.

Stone: No description.

Cure: Gentleman by the name of Summur from Iredell, N.C., was bitten by a dog that was "supposed to be mad." He immediately had the wounded flesh cut out and thoroughly cauterized, but not satisfied as to treatment, he went to Richmond, Virginia, in search of a madstone which he did not find. Then by accident he heard of the Pointer stone in Person County, about ten or twelve miles from Milton, and he apparently was relieved of his sickness by Mr. Pointer.

Source: *The* (Salem, N.C.) *People's Press*, 3 July 1857; reprinted in the *Milton Chronicle*.

56. *Pointer Madstone*. See *NCFJ*, 24:1, #1.

Owner: Dr. Pointer.

Stone: No description.

Cure: J.H. Blackwell was bitten in his ankle by a mad dog, which afterwards "died from a fit....Mr. Blackwell returned from Person last night. He feels no further uneasiness since the application of the mad stone and the cheerful assurance of Dr. Pointer on the subject."

Source: *Alamance Gleaner*, 17 June 1886; reprinted in the *Reidsville Times*.

57. *Roney Madstone*. See NCFJ, 24:1, #4, and 25:1, 33, #47.

Owners: Cornelia Roney, Pleas. Dixon, and Mrs. John N. Baker.

Stone: No description.

Cure: One "Sunday afternoon, near Stainback, Charlie Vincent, son of Mrs. P. C. Vincent, was bitten on the arm by a rabid dog. The dog came to Mrs. Vincent's & got into a fight with another dog which was bitten. We learn the dogs were killed. Charlie was carried to Mrs. Pleas. Dixon's, who lives two or three miles east of Haw River and whose aunt, Miss Cornelia Roney, owns a mad stone, which was applied and adhered to the wound."

Source: *Alamance Gleaner*, 9 May 1895.

58. *Roney Madstone*. See NCFJ, 24:1, #1.

Owners: Cornelia Roney et al.

Stone: No description.

Cure: A mad dog attacked the eight-year-old son of Charlie Vincent, a Negro living on S. K. Scott's premises. The dog was killed, and the boy, bitten on the temple, was carried the following day to the madstone of Miss Roney, at Haw River. The madstone was applied to the bite, and "it was thought [the stone] extracted the poison, and apparently the child was all right. He walked to Dr. Jeter's office Friday morning the 10th, and grew worse rapidly. He had spasm after spasm continually biting and snapping, spitting all the time, yet retaining perfect control of his reason. The appearance of water or the least puff of wind would cause violent convulsions. I never want to see another case of hydrophobia. The boy died Friday about 2 o'clock. The dog that bit him was a worthless little fice."

Source: P. R. Eston, Mebaneville, 13 July 1885, as recorded in the *Alamance Gleaner*, 16 July 1885.

59. *Dixon Madstone*. See #57 and 58 above and NCFJ, 25:1, 33, #47.

Owner: Pleas. Dixon, Haw River.

Stone: No description.

Cure: "A dog belonging to A. M. King, the fireman at Sidney Mills, went mad on Sunday and bit Mr. King on his arm. He went to Mr. Pleas. Dixon's, near Haw River, and had a mad stone applied, which adhered to the wound."

Source: *Alamance Gleaner*, 29 May 1902.

The Devil's Shoe String: A Cure for Rattlesnake Bites

by T. H. Macintosh

Devil's Shoe String is the popular name for a plant growing in the eastern United States. It is also known as goat's rue, cat gut, and turkey pea. Its former botanical designation was *Cracca virginiana*, but scientists today label it *Tephrosia virginiana*. Although there is no reference

to devil's shoe string being used for folk cures in *The Frank C. Brown Collection*, the following account from the Salem, N.C., *People's Press*, 8 June 1855, indicates a belief that it can cure the poisonous bite of a rattlesnake.

It may not be generally known to our readers that there is a certain cure for the rattlesnake bit growing plentifully in the woods, and known as "the Devil's Shoe String." Mr. Robert Milling was bitten on the hand, near the thumb, a week ago; when he saw it the flesh had rotted, where the fang entered, making holes the size of a goose quill. Mr. Milling says in twenty-four hours his body was swollen to twice its ordinary size, accompanied with violent fevers; the "devil's shoe string" was boiled in sweet milk and applied as a poultice to the hand as soon as possible, taking a purgative at the same time. After a few hours, considerable poison was discovered upon it, as also upon several subsequent ones, but in less quantity until the poison was drawn out. Mr. Milling is well, and only suffers from soreness. The weed is well known to the farmer, and should be gathered and laid up for emergency.

Several other cases have been pointed out where cures were effected by this plant, and those who know consider it infallible for snakebites, be they ever so poisonous.

Two Daniel Boone Legends

by Joseph D. Clark

Numerous legends are told of Daniel Boone's wanderings in the mountains of southern Appalachia, particularly about his adventures killing beasts and Indians. While I lived in East Tennessee as a boy, all the folk knew two particular legends about Dan'l.

One legend had it that Daniel, after crossing the mountains of North Carolina and East Tennessee, was wandering near a stream, seven miles north of what is now Johnson City, Tennessee. The stream is now named Boone's Creek. He was spied by a large body of Indians that soon surrounded him. Suddenly he disappeared from their view. He had dived into a deep part of the creek, swum under the water, and then hurriedly crawled under a ledge of rock overhanging the water. The Indians looked here and there along the creek. With no trace of him, they retreated to their tents about sundown, and some time after midnight Daniel wandered to the north and places unknown.

The other legend is related to Daniel's killing a bear below a sloping beech tree in Maupin Hollow, just north of Boone's Creek. This tree

was still standing, in rather poor condition, twenty-five years ago. Ravaged by disease, it has since come down during a heavy wind. Before its downfall the beech, about seven feet from its base, bore an inscription supposedly done by Boone: "On this tree D. Boone cilled a bar in 1760." This inscription was generally believed by hundreds of the folk who came to see it. And some of these viewers felt that it was conclusive evidence of Daniel's academic achievements.

The End of Patty Haig

by Joseph S. Hufham

Before The News Reporter Company in Whiteville ever sent me rural in Columbus County with a pickup truck to solicit subscriptions and to dig up stories to increase reader interest, I had already picked up lots of treasure-hunting stories.

One in particular made me laugh when I first heard it sung by one of my sisters when I was about eight years of age. Johnny Sands had married a girl by the name of Patty Haig. She was pretty, but she was a scolding woman.

The song went:

There was a man named Johnny Sands
Who married Patty Haig.
Although she was a pretty wife
She proved a terrible plague.

Said she to John, "We'll drown ourselves;
The river runs below.
I'll tie your hands behind your back
And we'll prepare to go."

So Johnny stood beside the stream.
She ran with all her force,
To push him in; he stepped aside
And she fell in, of course.

In a recent article in the New York Times, a reporter described Joseph Hufham as "an old man with a gray beard, but still young at heart." Mr. Hufman is a native of Sackletown, five miles south of Delco, N.C.

No splashing, dashing, like a fish:
"Oh save me, Johnny Sands."
"I can't, my Dear, though much I wish:
For you have tied my hands."

Even then I figured there was more to the song than that, but that is all my sister knew of it. I committed that to memory. It was not until after I'd graduated from Acme-Delco High School and had become employed by the newspaper that I decided to try to dig up the whole story. When I learned that it seemed to involve a pot of pirate gold, I began haunting the Cape Fear River section about three miles north of my home in Sackletown, inquiring of old timers who were up on the legends of the pirates: how they'd come up the river to careen their ships, and during their stay many of the pirates would go ashore and bury a container of treasure, if they'd made a good haul.

In the 1920's I was told oodles of stories, but no informant could recall anything about a man by the name of Johnny Sands who had married a girl by the name of Patty Haig, though here and there someone could recall a snatch of the song.

Nearer my home there was a farmer whom I'll call Ben, though that wasn't his name. One night I caught him at his tobacco barn curing a barn of tobacco. He had a watermelon. And after we ate it I began telling him of my problem—that of finding a Johnny Sands who had married a scolding wife by the name of Patty Haig.

He laughed and said, "That's no joke," and recounted the following tale.

Johnny Sands was a transient who stopped over by the river to do some trapping. He was batching in a little three-room house on the bluff overlooking the stream. Somewhat by chance he found a pot of treasure. Much more money than he'd ever dreamed of having.

When he confided that news to Miss Patty Haig who lived a few miles away. Maybe across the river. I don't know, but she agreed to marry him on halves. Instead, he said, "Marry me, and it is all yours as much as it is mine."

So she married him, and began fishing out gold coins too fast. Johnny warned her that she should use the money upon their agreement. She began ranting, raving, and saying, "I'll not spend more than my half."

They rowed quite a bit, and the next day, while Johnny was across the river tending some traps, Patty carried the coins away and buried them. The whole potful save some she had spent.

She tried to act as if nothing had happened when Johnny came home, but Johnny suspected something, and upon looking, found neither the pot nor the coins. He cornered her, and she began crying: "Somebody came in and got the pot while I was gone to the spring for a jug of water," she said.

Then they hitched for a fight, and Patty got right badly bruised up. But she denied bothering the pot. She pouted two or three days then came up with a suggestion:

"Johnny," she said, "our lives are going to be miserable together as long as we live. I don't want us to separate, so let's drown ourselves. The river is flowing against our bluff."

Johnny agreed. She said, "But you can swim. I can't. Let me tie your hands behind your back," and Johnny agreed to that!

So she tied his hands and marched him to the edge of the cliff. "Now you stand facing the river," she said, "and I'll back up a little, say a little prayer, and then I'll run and push you in with force enough I'll fall in, too."

"That sounds fair enough to me, Dear," Johnny agreed meekly.

So she backed up. Whether she prayed Johnny didn't know. But presently he heard her coming, stepped aside, and she couldn't stop. Overboard she went and the splash was loud, for she had fallen over fifteen feet before striking the water. Down she went, and when she bobbed up she called, "Save me, save me, Johnny Sands."

"I can't, my dear, though it's much I wish, for you have tied my hands." And he stood watching her sink the third time.

After that he put out word, and three days later they found Patty's body floating under the power of a bloat. So they took her out to the river bank and buried her. Johnny walked about in a look of shock, until another pretty Miss by the name of Susan Lovelace took pity on him, courted and married him. She didn't know about the pot of gold, so Johnny decided that she truly loved him.

In time he told Susan: "I had a pot of gold and my first wife took it out and buried it. I can't find it. If you'll find it we'll build ourselves a fine house. Keep looking for subsoil that maybe she left on top of the ground."

Susan hunted all the winter while Johnny worked his traps. When spring opened, she said, "Johnny, go with me. I want you to go with me to a place I found, and we'll carry a shovel."

About a mile away they dugged up a pot of treasure, but it wasn't American money. It was Spanish gold coins and some pieces-of-eight silver like Long John Silver's parrot used to scream out at Jim Hawkins, the cabin boy.

They didn't build a house right away. Later, though, Johnny sold it as gold weight, and got enough to buy the land and build a house. And ever after they kept looking for the pot that Patty Haig had supposedly stolen away and buried. But when Johnny became an old man with gray beard and hobbling on a stick, he told Susan: "Maybe Patty Haig was right. Maybe somebody watching, stole the pot and carried it away by boat. If she hadn't tied my hands I'd have saved her. I can't forget how she looked up at me from the water, begging me to save her. I think we simply carried a joke too far."

[Editor's Note: "Johnny Sands" is a ballad well attested in tradition and in print in Great Britain and North America. For a listing of variants, see *The Frank C. Brown Collection of Folklore*, II, 448-50, item 181. The final stanza of Brown 181C is the same as that sung by Mr. Hufham's sister. The traditional ballad does not seem to have involved sunken treasure.

This narrative which Mr. Hufham collected around 1920 seems to be an example of the developing of a local legend to explain events in a ballad of wide distribution. The farmer's story may, in fact, be in response to Mr. Hufham's stated problem in finding a treasure story explaining the song. Mr. Hufham notes that the ballad was well attested in Columbus County, but that this is the only instance of a narrative explaining it.]

Better Ag than Fag!— And Other Carolina Jokes

by William H. Beezley

The light blue Buick flashes down the stretch of Tobacco Road that separates Chapel Hill and Raleigh, leaving behind a cloud of dust and only a glimpse of a bumper-sticker exhortation, "Honk if yo're for Carolina, Moo if Yore Fo State!" The red blur going in the opposite direction carries a retort across its rear chrome, "State was created to correct the Chapel Hill mistake." A gleaming VW rabbit, parked in Raleigh, carries a decal announcing, "I'd rather be in Chapel Hill," while the ramshackle pick-up in the adjoining space wears red-and-white patches declaring, "I'd rather *pee* in Chapel Hill" (44) [Numbers in parenthesis refer to informants listed at the end of the text.] and "Directions to UNC: 1. Straight till you smell it. 2. Left till you step in it" (24). These automotive declarations record the rivalry between the University of North Carolina and North Carolina State University that has existed since State was chartered in 1887, roughly a hundred years after its neighboring institution.

State-Carolina competition follows the usual patterns of college humor, exemplified in Texas-Texas A & M jokes.¹ In Texas or anywhere else, variants of the same stories told in Raleigh can be heard on nearly any campus. One traditional story contrasts ideas of cleanliness:

A State fan and a Carolina fan walked into the bathroom at the football game. They both pissed. As the State fan started out the door, and the Carolina fan was washing his hands, the Carolina fan says, "At Carolina they teach us to wash our hands after we piss." The State fan says, "At State, they teach us not to piss on our hands." (14, 15, 23, 24, 29)

Another campus standard goes:

A State grad and another guy were on an airplane. And as they were about to get off, the State grad says, "I bet you went to Carolina." The other guy says, "I sure did. How did you know? Was it my noticeable macho appeal, my high level of intelligence, my good taste for food and women, or what?" "No," says the State grad. "I saw UNC on your class ring when you picked your nose." (37)

Bill Beezley is an Associate Professor of History at N.C. State University in Raleigh. His essay on folktales of the athletic locker room appears in a recent special issue of the Journal of the Folklore Institute edited by Richard Dorson.

A variant of this canard asks, "Do you know what a flip-top lid to a canned drink is?"—"A Carolina class ring with a built-in nose picker" (38).

Other Carolina jokes draw on the humor of society at large. The "letter to an advice columnist" has appeared in business offices, government agencies, and college dormitories.² At North Carolina State, one student, in a worried, hushed voice, confided:

Dear Abby,

I never thought I'd be writing you, but I have this problem. You see, I'm an illegitimate child and my mother runs a whorehouse in a Salvation Army home and my father, when he's not in jail for rape or selling drugs, is drunk and never home. My older sister is a prostitute and my older brother was shot dead while holding up a liquor store. My youngest brother, who is 10 years old, runs betting slips back and forth to bookies. You see I have this problem. I love this girl who is blind in one eye from a cop's bullet she got when she was robbing the bank. She has three illegitimate children. I'd like to marry her. What I want to know is, should I tell her about my other brother—the one who goes to Carolina?

signed, Ashamed of the last brother (47, 19)

Another informant dropped the letter format, and said:

Did you hear the one about the young man who had a brother in prison for rape, murder, and arson, a father who was head of the organized crime ring in town, a sister who was a pusher, prostitute and gambler? He didn't know how to tell his fiancée's parents about his brother—who went to UNC. (51)

Despite following traditional patterns, the State-Carolina rivalry has added piquancy because only a little more than twenty miles divides the two campuses. They are so close, in fact, that many Carolina undergrads learn the distance by reciting the following catechism: "What's the difference between Culture and Agriculture?—About 30 miles" (6).³ In the past State's Aggies and Engineers may have been a little self-conscious about their bib-overalls image and only occasionally did they retaliate, mocking the drinking habits of the "gentlemen" from "Whiskey Hill." One old chestnut asks, "What do you always find wherever there are four Carolina men?"—"A fifth." Another relates:

Two Carolina med students went into a man's room to take his temperature. As the man was covered up to his neck, the students, standing on opposite sides of the bed, reached under the covers for his wrists. By mistake, they got hold of each other's wrists, and took each other's temperatures. One pulled back and said, "I don't find anything wrong with him. He seems OK to me." The other said, "You're right. He's just drunk." (15)

Another crack of the same kind asks, "Have you heard of the Carolina student who took flying lessons? He flew blind on his first night flight for the first 500 miles—then he sobered up" (15).

More often the State reaction took the form of pranks before the 1960's. Alexander Brevard (3), a student at State, collected these stories from his father, who had attended NCSU.

I think it was 1941 or 1942 when the football games with UNC featured a freshman team game one week and the varsity game the next. A group of State students (S.P.E. frat, I think) kidnapped the UNC ram. The UNC administration threatened to cancel the varsity game if the Ram was not returned. He was sheared and dyed with good textile dye—red on the head end and blue on the other.

During the 1950's, I think, the UNC Navy ROTC swimming pool was dyed red by some State students.

Another time, some State students wrote PISS ON CAROLINA on the grass in UNC's Kenan stadium with grass killer.

The elder Brevard reported that State students had many versions of the Carolina pep song that begins "Hark the Sound." The most popular adaptation went, "On beyond the Durham ditches/There's a place known well,/There ten thousand sons of bitches/Slowly go to hell" (3).

In the last two decades with the increased salaries and prestige for technical professions, State students have adopted a more critical view of the Liberal Arts students down the road. This portrayal of Carolina men goes beyond the "tea sipper" characterization drawn by Aggies of their rivals in Austin.⁴ Wolfpackers now describe their cousins as "sissies" at best, and at worse downright perverts. This opinion received some support when one of the UNC male cheerleaders was arrested in 1976 near the State campus and charged with indecent exposure. "Rabbit," as he was known, regularly hid in the bushes near campus, then jumped out stark naked to expose himself to coeds. His one precaution was to coat his body with lotion so the hands of any would-be captor would slip off.⁵

This episode resulted in many stories about the "prissy" behavior of UNC males and has led to stories about their alleged homosexual preferences. Graffiti in Chapel Hill confirm this portrait. One bathroom wall message advised Gays to avoid detection by meeting in Harrelson Hall on the State campus, where the naive Aggies would ignore them. A letter to the editor of the *Technician*, State's student newspaper, seemed to indicate that the Tar Heels had followed this advice. The author of the letter complained of homosexual propositions he had received in Harrelson's late night study rooms. The offers, of course, were presumed to have come from Carolina students.⁶ Graffiti in Harrelson Hall's men's rooms offer homosexual encounters to anyone who will call a telephone number in Chapel Hill. One often repeated joke expressing this view of UNC students asks, "At Carolina, how do they separate the men from the boys?"—"With a crowbar" (42, 50). Current characterization of the Carolina man as homosexual is best captured in the retort to any anti-State comment, "Better Ag than Fag" (6, 23).

State students flaunt their masculinity in a version of the old campus standard:

Did ya' hear that they had to cancel last year's Christmas play at Carolina? The director couldn't find three wisemen or a virgin on campus (21, 35, 49).⁷

The preferred North Carolina State variant goes:

State stud at Christmas: "Why don't y'all have a nativity in Chapel Hill?" Carolina Whimpy: "Well, we can't find any wisemen and, after our girls come back from State, there're no virgins." (50)

No virgins cavort in Chapel Hill—Silent Sam testifies to that. This Minute Man statue guards the campus, and, it is said, he will fire his musket if a virgin walks by (3).⁸

Jokes about Carolina coeds may offer another explanation for the allegations of Tar Heel homosexuality. Consider these examples:

What do you call a good-looking girl at Carolina? A visitor (52).

The UNC Coed was so fat she had to put on her make-up with a paint roller (7).

You've heard of the suicide blonde at Chapel Hill? Dyed by her own hand (15).

Besides jokes about the sexual interest of UNC undergraduates, Wolfpack students mock Tar Heel sports. The UNC athletic department hired a new football coach, Dick Crum, in the fall, 1978, and promoted fan support with a "Carolina Fever" campaign to sell season tickets. Both became humorous subjects in Raleigh. Within days of the first billboard proclaiming "Carolina Fever" bumper stickers appeared that declared, "Carolina Fever is a social disease." Wolfpack fans soon asked, "If Carolina Fever is a social disease, then what is Dick Crum?—A form of jock itch!" (18, 20, 40).

The Tar Heel football team had a losing season in 1978, including a loss to the Wolfpack. State students celebrated Chapel Hill's misfortune:

They gave the Carolina coach a \$5,000 bonus because they had a five-year plan to deemphasize football and he did it in one year (13).

They gave Crum an honorary doctorate because he found a cure for Carolina fever. (13, 14, 27).

The basketball rivalry in the Atlantic Coast Conference is more intense than the football competition. UNC's coach Dean Smith has an outstanding won-loss record, numerous conference titles, and many tournament victories, but his team has never won the national championship. Of course, Coach Smith becomes the butt of many jokes told in Raleigh. One pokes fun at what Wolfpackers believe is Smith's holier-than-thou attitude:

Basketball coaches Norm Sloan of State, Bill Foster of Duke, and Carl Tacy of Wake Forest died and went to heaven. As they were being introduced around, St. Peter told them: "This is a nice place. Very few aggravations. About the only thing that might be considered unpleasant is the waiting. We have to wait in line for everything."

Sure enough, at dinner that night, there was a long line of angels. Suddenly there was a commotion as a line-breaker charged to the front, pushing other angels out of the way. He grabbed the food and began eating; soon he demanded to be brought seconds, and the angels meekly complied.

"Wow, who's that?" the coaches whispered to St. Peter.

"Oh, that's God," said the saint. "Sometimes he thinks he's Dean Smith."⁹

Smith has become famous over the past four or five years for his slowdown offense, called the four corners. UNC's opponents recognize this tactic as a stall. One Carolina joke indicates that the coach does not limit these delaying techniques to the basketball court: "Do you know what Dean Smith did on his honeymoon?—He went into the four corners."

The Tar Heel coach also becomes the subject of many well-worn stories. The "Pig" tale, for example has long been a standard ethnic joke,¹⁰ and Carolina story (5,8). This variant incorporates the basketball coach.

They used to always play the State-Carolina football game at the same time as the state fair. One time a bunch of State students were going into the game, and they saw Dean Smith coming in with a pig. One guy said, "Hey, where did you get that?" The pig looked up and said, "I won him at the fair." (49)

Whether it's basketball or some other sport, no Wolfpack supporter can understand how anyone can root for Carolina. One tale attempts to explain the process for becoming a UNC fan:

Some guys were playing with a marvelous new invention that can raise a person's I.Q. They decided to see what would happen to a person if they lowered his I.Q. They lowered a subject's I.Q. to zero, and eagerly waited to see what he would say. As he came to, very slowly he said, "G-o T-A-R H-E-E-L-S!" (9, 15, 39).

Many Carolina riddles and tales are recognizable as numbskull jokes told on minority and ethnic groups. Here is a sampling told by students to prove that "gross ignorance is 144 UNC undergrads" (30):

After searching in vain for hours before finding their car after a football game, Moe and Joe, two Carolina students, tried to devise a plan to prevent it from happening again. So they purchased a camel expressly for the purpose of riding it to the games so they would have no trouble finding their ride. At the State game played in Raleigh, the two Carolina students rode their camel through downtown Raleigh out to Carter Stadium. They parked their camel and congratulated each other on their brilliant scheme before going inside.

Well, it so happened there was a circus with the State Fair, and the camel driver had tickets to the State-Carolina game. Not trusting his camels too far away from him he took them with him to the game, and left them right beside the Carolina students' camel. Well, needless to say Joe and Moe were very dismayed when they saw 20 camels where they had left theirs. Suddenly Moe said he knew of a way to tell their camel and started walking up behind every one and lifting its tail. Confused, his Carolina buddy asked Moe just what the hell he thought he was doing. "Well," the Tar Heel said, "as we were riding through Raleigh I heard these guys talking. They were saying 'Look at those two a-----s on that camel.' " (4)

Psychology students at UNC-CH were conducting an experiment using a flea. They placed the flea on the table, tapped the table with a pencil, and the flea jumped. They removed two legs from the flea, placed it on the table, tapped the table with a pencil, and the flea jumped. They removed two more legs from the flea, placed it on the table, tapped the table with a pencil, and the flea jumped. They removed the final two legs from the flea, placed it on the table, tapped the table with a pencil, and nothing happened. The flea did not move. The students concluded: "IF YOU REMOVE ALL THE LEGS FROM A FLEA IT GOES DEAF." (15)

One of Carolina's med students was doing ambulance duty. He and his driver-partner were called into a very poor section of town to pick up a lady about to have a baby. They were a bit late, and the med student had to deliver the baby with the family looking on. He made the delivery, picked up the baby to lay it on the table, and dropped it. Quickly, he bent and tried to pick it up, but dropped it again. This time, the baby cried. He carefully picked it up, smiled at the family, and said, "You know, sometimes you have to drop them three times before they cry." (15)

Did you hear about the two Carolina grads who married and had a family? They named their fifth child, "Ming Tei," for they had learned at Carolina that every fifth child born on this earth is Chinese. (15)

The Carolina football coach was looking down his roster and noticed a player he knew relatively little about. He called him over and decided to find out a little information. The coach said "Obichensi, how old are you?" The player counted silently on his left hand for several seconds and said, "twenty-two." Coach said, "That's pretty old for a freshman. How many years did you play in high school?" Player counted on his right hand, said, "seven." Coach said, "I don't believe I know your first name, what is it?" Player bobbed his head up and down in rhythm several times and said, "George." Coach said, "Listen, I can understand why you counted on your left hand for age and your right hand for the number of years in high school, but why are you bobbing your head?" Player said, "Oh, coach, you know that old tune, "Happy Birthday to you, Happy Birthday to you, Happy Birthday, dear *George*." (16)

A Carolina graduate walked into the doctor's office and asked the doctor to do something about his two burnt ears. The doctor asked him how he had burned them. The Carolina graduate said, "Well, I was sitting down reading the paper and my wife was ironing. She had to do something, so she left the iron sitting on the board. Just then the telephone rang. I reached over picked up the iron and tried to answer it. I burned the be-jeezus out of one ear." "Ok," said the doctor, "but how did you burn the other ear?" "The darned fool called back." (A)

If State students don't immediately recall a joke-riddle that pictures the UNC undergrad as drunk, homosexual, promiscuous, or stupid, they comment on their rival's family. As in this story:

A pre-med student began considering schools to enroll in for advanced study. Schools that he applied to included Duke, ECU, and UNC-CH. Duke and East Carolina turned him down—so he then went to Carolina. The day of his interview at Carolina finally arrived and the student felt confident that he would get in. However to his dismay, the professor just shook his head and said, "I'm sorry, but we can't accept you at this institution." In anguish, the student shouted, "I'll be a

son-of-a-bitch." and the professor replied, "You prove *that*, and we'll let you in."
(3, 27, 28)

Many miscellaneous jokes are told on Carolina such as "Flush twice—Chapel Hill's a long way away" (2, 46). These riddles, limericks, and epigrams often have a relationship to national or international affairs. Outside North Carolina State's Reynolds Coliseum before basketball games during the 1979-1980 Iranian crisis, student entrepreneurs sold bumper stickers that read, "The Ayatollah Went to Carolina."

Carolina students tell State jokes, of course—but that's another story.

NOTES

1. J. Barre Toelken provides an excellent introduction to campus folklore, including humor, in his selection, "The Folklore of Academe," in Jan Harold Brunvand, *The Study of American Folklore* (New York: Norton & Company, 1968), pp. 317-37.

2. For examples of this kind of humor, see the section entitled "Traditional Letters" in Alan Dundes and Carol R. Pagter, *Work Hard and You Shall Be Rewarded: Urban Folklore From the Paperwork Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), pp. 3-48.

3. See Sharon Costner, "'State' Jokes on the Carolina Campus," *North Carolina Folklore Journal*, 23:4 (Nov. 1975), 107-112, especially 117.

4. The T-sipper is a stock character in jokes told about the University of Texas.

5. *The News and Observer*, May 7, 1976.

6. *The Technician* (North Carolina State University), Nov. 8, 1978, letter to the editor entitled "Distraction."

7. This same Carolina joke is told on the Wake Forest University campus. See Rick Sluder, "Hey, Have You Heard the One about the Big 4...," *The News and Observer*, Sept. 9, 1979.

8. For virginity legends, see Richard M. Dorson, *American Folklore* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), pp. 254-55.

9. A variant of this joke is told about Vince Lombardi, see Robert W. Wells, *Vince Lombardi: His Life and Times* (Canoga Park, Calif.: Major Books, 1971), p. 170.

10. Mac E. Barrick, "Racial Riddles & the Polack Joke," *Keystone Folklore Quarterly*, 15:1 (Spring 1970), 6, 14, and no. 17.

11. See Barrick and also Alan Dundes, "A Study of Ethnic Slurs: The Jew and the Polack in the United States," *Journal of American Folklore*, 84:332 (April-June 1971), 186-203, for an introduction to this literature.

Informants

All the informants for these Carolina jokes were North Carolina State University students during 1978 and 1979, except Red Mitchum, the master of ceremonies at the players' banquet given at the 1978 Tangerine Bowl in Orlando, Florida. The students are listed alphabetically with the date on which I collected their jokes.

A. Red Mitchum, Orlando, Florida, 22 Dec. 1978.

1. Roland Atwater, 8 June 1979.
2. Sherry Brazzle, 4 April 1979.
3. Alexander Brevard, 15 Sept. 1978.
4. Kenneth Brewer, 13 Dec. 1978.
5. Anne-Marie Bridgeman, 1 May 1979.
6. Jim Broughton, 8 June 1979.
7. Steve Buckingham, 10 Nov. 1978.
8. Lee Bumgardener, 8 Sept. 1978.
9. Lucy Burt, 13 Dec. 1978.
10. Amy Canaale, 8 June 1979.
11. Leigh G. Clark, 2 May 1979.
12. Lon Coone, 8 June 1979.
13. Name withheld, 22 Nov. 1978.
14. Anne Crites, 30 Sept. 1979.
15. Candy Darnell, 13 Dec. 1978.
16. Pam Early, 2 May 1979.
17. Lewis Finch, 26 March 1979.
18. Dan Franquemont, 5 April 1979.
19. John Geddes, 5 Dec. 1978.
20. Paul Geiersbach, 13 Dec. 1978.
21. Ronny Greene, 8 June 1979.
22. Barbara Hamilton, 8 June 1979.
23. Robert Harmon, 10 and 15 Nov. 1978.
24. Dan Haygood, 26 March and 2 May 1979.
25. Peter Hertl, 13 Dec. 1978.
26. Ed Honeycutt, 5 Dec. 1978.
27. Butch Humphreys, 1 May 1979.
28. Stephanie Johnson, 2 May 1979.
29. Jennifer Kay, 10 Nov. 1978.
30. Name withheld, 4 April 1979.
31. Ernie Ladd, 22 Sept. 1978.
32. Russell Laing, 8 June 1979.
33. Stuart Long, 8 June 1979.
34. Allen Oakley, 31 Jan. 1979.
35. Amy Parker, 10 Nov. 1978.
36. Donnie Pickett, 10 Oct. 1978.
37. Bobby Puryear, 26 March 1979.
38. Wayne Rogers, 8 June 1979.
39. Marie Rothewell, 13 Dec. 1978.
40. Olga Santo-Tomas, 13 Dec. 1978.
41. Lou Anne Smith, 8 Dec. 1978.
42. Arty Schrone, 8 June 1979.
43. Kent Seavey, 13 Dec. 1978.
44. Steve Sedlacek, 13 Dec. 1978.
45. Andrew Smith, 8 Dec. 1978.
46. Tommy Stanford, 8 Dec. 1978.
47. Rob Stull, 10 Nov. and 13 Dec. 1978.
48. Brian Suddreth, 31 Aug. 1978.
49. Mike Summey, 16 Sept. and 4 Dec. 1978.
50. Jimmy Toompas, 15 and 16 Sept. and 10 Nov. 1979.
51. Michael Wells, 5 May 1979.
52. Steve Wolf, 25 March 1979.
53. Donna Workman, 26 March 1979.
54. Jeanne Zumbrunnen, 13 Dec. 1978.

Reviews

It Still Lives. Foxfire Records .001, 1980.

Reviewed by Lucy M. Long

The four men featured on this album come from Beech Mountain, a part of the Blue Ridge in the northwest corner of North Carolina. Since at least the 1930's this area has been a rich resource of traditional life and lore. Early collectors such as Maurice Matteson and Mellinger Henry published songs they had gathered there, introducing the area to folklorists and folk music enthusiasts. A steady stream of visitors has since trickled into the area, encouraging the survival (and, in some cases, revival) of traditions. Frank Profitt's fame as a banjo player and singer during the 1950's and '60's brought national recognition and recordings, and books of music and the *Grandfather* and *Jack Takes* have helped establish the area as a bastion of surviving mountain culture.

These men—Stanley Hicks, Tedra Harmon (who died before the album was produced), and Leonard and Clifford Glenn (father and son)—are both recipients and carriers of those traditions. Each learned his skills from his family or community, acquiring techniques and repertoire by imitation and oral transmission, and each plays an active role in the perpetuation of traditional mountain music and musical instrument making. The title of this album, *It Still Lives*, captures the spirit with which these men view their traditions. They see them as integral parts of their lives, a source of great pleasure and, increasingly, supplemental income. In presenting excerpts from these musical and narrative traditions, the album attempts to portray the settings of these men's lives, offering glimpses into their personalities and the culture they represent.

Sponsored by Foxfire Inc., the album was recorded and produced by high school students in Rabun Gap, Ga. Considering the age and experience of the creators, the result is excellent. What they may lack in

Lucy Long, a Davidson College graduate, produced, recorded, and photographed an excellent slide-tape program on the musical traditions of the Hicks family of Beech Mountain. She is presently doing graduate work in ethnomusicology at the University of Maryland.

technical sophistication, they make up for in a refreshing enthusiasm that presents a warm and appreciative picture of these men and their traditions.

Other than some technical flaws in the recording and production, there is little to criticize. The quantity and quality of information given in the booklet is inconsistent, but all of it is useful. There are some minor details in the presentation and format of the album that could be better. The most obvious one is the title: "Old time Blue Ridge mountain music by traditional instrument makers." Since the recording includes narrative (and long sections of it) as well as music, the title is misleading.

More serious is the assumption that Beech Mountain traditions are representative of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The Beech Community is a unique pocket of culture that, because of its long association with collectors and folklorists, has made a conscious effort to retain and revitalize certain aspects of its traditional heritage. The dulcimers and fretless banjos that come from there are not widespread in the Blue Ridge, and, on the Beech itself, they tend to be found only in certain families and branches of those families, and among "foreigners."

The complete album package includes a 12" disc, jacket cover, and twenty-page booklet, all of which are attractive and informative. The front of the jacket cover displays an appealing photograph of Stanley Hicks with a boy in Hicks' workshop, proof that Hicks' traditions are still alive and will continue to live through youngsters such as this one. Microphones in the photo define the interview context, but do not lessen the effectiveness of the scene. Photographs on the back jacket cover show each of the men playing or holding an instrument. A short essay describes the background and contents of the album and lists the names of the Foxfire students involved.

The twenty-page descriptive booklet includes photographs, texts of songs and narratives, and information on the men, their music, and instruments. It begins by introducing each of the performers through transcriptions of interviews with them. The transcriptions give background on each individual's family and personal life and explain how he acquired his skills. An excellent discussion of the history of the banjo and dulcimer on Beech Mountain is included, along with an analysis of playing styles. The interview format allows the men to speak for themselves, using their own homespun wisdom and humor, and distinct and often poetic turns of phrase. Photographs illustrating the transcriptions show details of the instruments as well as various views of the men and help to paint a warm and personable portrait of them.

Annotations to the individual cuts of the recording follow the introductions of the performers. The annotations are informative but inconsistent in the type and quantity of information given. Each of the narrative sections is transcribed word for word, which is helpful since the mountain accents may be difficult for some to understand. Notes on the origin and recording history of the selections are also given. Annotations to the music selections provide historical information on each song—its origin, popularity, and bibliographic and discographic references. They also sometimes include texts of the songs or variants to the verses sung. An especially helpful bit of information provided is the description of banjo playing styles used on certain selections. Most of the annotations show careful research and are helpful in giving an idea of the popularity and use of a particular selection in the Beech Mountain area.

The selections offer a good sampling of the musical and narrative traditions of the men and their community. Some genres of music—such as old hymns, gospel songs, and Child ballads—that are integral to the image of the area and are still thriving were left out. Although these performers may not play these types of songs as often as some of the ones on the album, those types do exist in their active repertoires and should have been included for a more complete presentation. The songs that were chosen, however, are some of the favorites of the performers as well as of the community.

The narratives selected are also favorites of the community. Beech Mountain is famous for the Jack Tales, and probably every visitor to Hicks' house has heard the story of the "Stinger Snake." Riddles do not seem to be as common as stories, but, according to Hicks, they were very popular when he was young. In general, the selections, both musical and narrative, are representative of what any visitor might hear on stopping by one of these men's homes.

The album, though, does not allow the men to be as musically versatile as they are in real life. Although the booklet describes some of their activities besides music making, it does not mention their variety of musical talents. Both Stanley Hicks and Clifford Glenn play the dulcimer, but neither plays it on the album. Leonard Glenn, who does play dulcimer on the recording, is not heard playing banjo, which he does quite well. Hicks also plays harmonica and sings ballads and hymns. The Glenns do some singing as well.

Although the album package does an excellent job of giving context and life to the selections, some technical flaws in the sound recording and production lessen the album's effectiveness. The original recording seems to be quite good, although the balance between instruments and voice could be better. The final editing of the selections lacks

sophistication. Sound levels of each cut are not consistent, and narration before or after musical selections tends to fade in and out. There are also some false starts and mumbling that could easily have been edited out. In general, the editing does not bring out the best in the performers or show them off to their best advantage.

In spite of these faults, *It Still Lives* is a tribute both to its creators and the men who perform on it. It successfully captures not only excerpts from a living tradition but the spirit of that tradition as well.

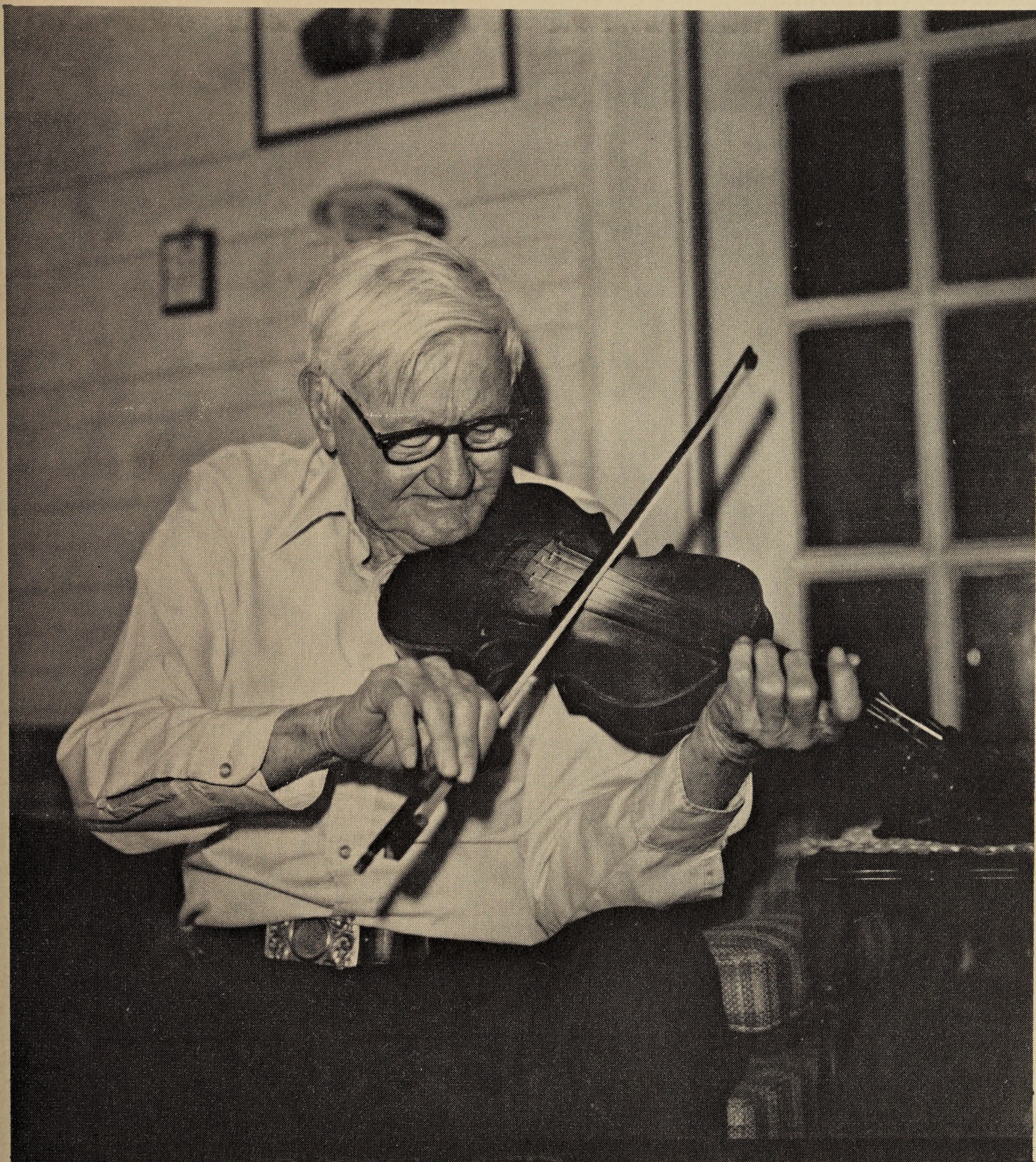
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Cover: Tommy Jarrell at home, 1981. Photography by Tom Rankin.



North Carolina State University Humanities Foundation, Inc.

North Carolina State University / Post Office Box 5067 / Raleigh 27650 / 919-737-2846

January 25, 1982

Mr. Thomas McGowan
N. C. Folklore Journal
English Department
ASU
Boone, NC 28607

Dear Thomas:

At the July gathering of the North Carolina Writers Conference it was announced that a Guy Owen Memorial Fund was being established in the North Carolina State University Humanities Foundation. One of the first objectives of this fund was to provide for the publication of Guy's last collection of short stories. The UNC Press has tentatively agreed to publish the volume, but requests a subsidy of \$5,000.

The Fund now has in hand \$3,116, and I am writing members of the Writers Conference in hopes of raising the balance of the funds required. Any contribution will be greatly appreciated.

Checks should be made payable to the NCSU Humanities Foundation for the Guy Owen Memorial Fund and mailed to Box 5067, Raleigh, NC 27650.

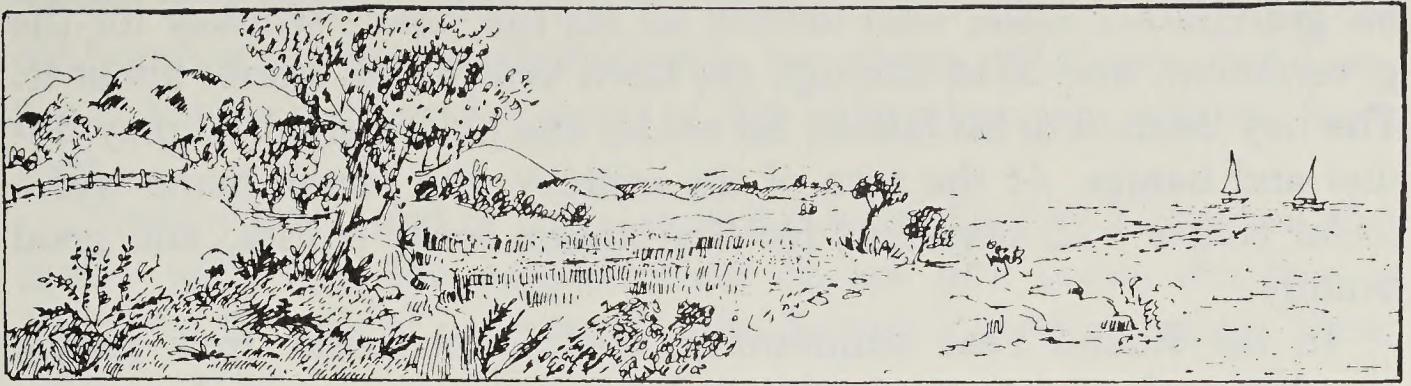
With many thanks and best wishes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sam Ragan".

Sam Ragan, Director
N. C. State University
Humanities Foundation

SR:ed



1981 Brown-Hudson Awards

The Brown-Hudson Award was established in 1970 to honor two distinguished members of the North Carolina Folklore Society, the late Frank C. Brown and Arthur Palmer Hudson. Both had served as its Secretary-Treasurer, Dr. Brown from 1913 to 1944 and Dr. Hudson from 1945 to 1966. Dr. Hudson was also the founder and editor until 1966 of *North Carolina Folklore*.

Award recipients are selected by the Society's Committee on Awards according to the following criteria: First, that the recipient be a resident of North Carolina at the time of the presentation. Secondly, that he or she be a knowledgeable and practicing folklorist in one or more areas of folkloric studies, such as collecting, editing, or publishing folklore, using folk materials in creative work, collecting or singing folk songs, promoting folk dancing, developing or producing the crafts of the people, and, in general, recording or interpreting the customs and ways of the people.

The following Brown-Hudson Awards were presented at the Society's annual meeting in Raleigh on November 20, 1981.

Thomas Jefferson Jarrell

The Wilderness Trail, used first by Indians and then—even before the Revolutionary War—by North Carolinians going into the valley of Virginia or on into Tennessee, runs northwest beyond Winston-Salem, past Pilot Mountain, and crosses the Blue Ridge at Low Gap, just below Fisher's Peak. Thomas Jefferson Jarrell, who was born in 1901, grew up on the southern slope of Fisher's Peak in a small, isolated, self-sufficient community near Round Peak. Tommy was especially fond of

his grandfather Rufe, who farmed all his life, made whiskey for the government, and lived through the Civil War to tell stories about it. The boy listened to his father, his uncle, and older neighbors play fiddles and banjos. At the turn of the century, the Jarrell home was a social center well respected for fine music, witty stories, and good brandy.

In the Round Peak community, traditional music drew people together to dance at corn huskings, bean stringings, wood choppings, and Christmas celebrations, and the fiddle-banjo combination achieved there a distinctively blended regional character. Examples of this musical style as it existed in the 1920's appear on the County record of the DaCosta Woltz's Southern Broadcasters, a semi-professional band, which features the fiddling of Tommy's father, Benjamin Franklin Jarrell. This homemade music, which still brings people together at fiddlers' conventions, neighborhood dances, and teaching sessions, is the focus of Tommy's present life.

Tommy, who learned his music as a youth before the influence of commercial recordings and radio, has preserved two generations of the old instrumental styles and repertoires that thrived in his region before 1925. Tommy has described taking up this music. He first learned to play banjo on the piece "Old Reuben":

And there's where I began. That was—Oh, I was between seven and eight years old. I don't know just exactly. I played it till I was thirteen. I played with Daddy and Uncle Charlie, and I learned to play them tunes the old way [Charlie's] and the new way [Daddy's] too, you see. Ah, just by ear! They never showed me nothing. I never asked them to. They would've. My daddy never showed me a thing....But I'd watch it. He would've. If I'd asked him, he'd 'a showed me. But I reckon I was gettin' along so good with it, he just left me alone.¹

Tommy also tells of his father's giving him his first instrument and of what Grandpap had to say about that:

And my daddy then he'd seen I was gonna play the banjo. He went and bought me a little banjo about that long. I reckon it was stained with a pokeberry stain on the neck. It was a homemade banjo. I don't know what kind of skin it had on it—whether it was a calf skin or ground-hog hide or what it was. But the little-ole thing played good.

I never will forget what my granddaddy said when Daddy brought it in. He come in with it one night. He says, "Here, Tom." Says, "I brought you a banjo."

And Granddaddy looked up at him and he says, "Hell," that was his byword. Says, "Hell, you ought'a bought him a damn mattock." [Laughs.] Granddaddy believed in work, you know. He couldn't make no music. But after I got to playing that thing, he'd ask me to play tunes. You know, he enjoyed it.

After Tommy learned banjo, he took up the fiddle. By the time he was 16, he played for dances in an old house at Round Peak. He and Uncle Charlie played in one room, and his Daddy and another fellow

played in the other room, and the people danced in both rooms. That old house where the people danced in two rooms still stands, and Tommy continues to play for many of the folks who were courting back then.

Tommy later used to go up to visit Charlie Barnett Lowe and play music with him for neighborhood dances just across the line in Virginia. He tells of courting Charlie Barnett Lowe's daughter Nina:

Charlie was the biggest fool over me you ever seen. Why he'd come down here and pick me and [my brother] Fred up and make us go home with him. Yea he'd come down the mountain to Mt. Airy. Bring his wagon. "Now come on; you boys gotta go home with me."

Well, they lived up there and the houses was a long way apart. You know we'd go up there to stay with him and if he had any work to do, why we'd just fall in and do it. Help him do it. Then when we'd get done, we'd drink us some liquor and make us some music, fix up a dance somewhere.

The first time I ever saw her—was at her home. Never talked to her none for a year or two after that. Fred went with her a little bit. When we'd go to have a dance, he'd dance with her, walk with her home you know. I'd be a-walking with—Me and Charlie'd be making music, a-walking along. Yea, I liked her.

I can take you within twenty steps, by gad, of where I—where we talked about that. That was in 19 and 23, long about the middle of the summer. We was a—(Well might not 'a been quite the middle of—) Anyway we was a-hoeing corn. Up there they had a lot of grass; you had to chop the grass from around the corn, the briars, and things. They'd plow it but they couldn't plow it all. Leave some between the hills you know. You had to get that out. That's what we was a-doing.

I'd been going with her about a year I guess. And we was a-hoeing corn along there and I said, "Nina, if you think you and me can get along okay, we'll get married. But right now I want to tell you, before we make any plans—" I said, "Now you know I make whiskey, I drink whiskey, and I play cards and I gamble a little once in a while. I play the fiddle and I go to dances." And I says, "I ain't never figuring on quitting doing that. But now if you think we can get along all right, we'll get married. But now if you think we can't, by gad, right now is the time to say something about it. And we'll just quit right here where we're at."

She said, "I believe we can get along all right."

So we did. And that's all there is to that story.²

As Tommy said, he aimed to keep on playing the fiddle, and he did. Later the time came when Tommy was the one who remembered the old tunes and the new tunes of his father's generation:

[Sounds of banjo strings] Listen now, this is the way Charlie Barnett Lowe had his banjo tuned when he died. About two weeks after he was buried (and it was just an old, homemade kind of a banjo; it wasn't no count much), he had it hanging on a nail up on the wall. I reached up there and got it. It was in perfect tune; that was the last tune he ever played right

there—"John Brown's Dream." [On banjo, Tommy plays "John Brown's Dream: The Devil Is Dead," the tune that Daddy and Charlie Lowe made up out of "Pretty Little Gal."]

As well as being a remarkable musician on banjo and fiddle, Tommy is a singular vocalist with a powerful style whose repertory includes Primitive Baptist hymns, ballads, and a large number of unusual fiddle and banjo songs. He is an exceptional storyteller who relates family reminiscences and dramatic regional parables with wit. He has transmitted his traditions, in person and through various media, to a growing number of apprentices within, and without, his own community. He is not only a bearer and transmitter of regional styles and repertory but also an innovative artist in his own right. He continues to add imaginative variations to his tunes and subtle refinements to his playing technique. Tommy's contribution to received tradition, as well as several tunes played in the two styles of his early mentors, appear on his recent album *Sail Away Ladies*, named after a tune he learned from Old Man Pet, a Round Peak grandfather. He sees this album as a means of preserving and sharing his music.

[A slide show accompanied this part of Professor Conway's presentation.]

Every Easter, back in Tommy's early days, his father and others used to go up on Fisher's Peak to play music. Down in the hollow at the old home place, Tommy could hear them. On another Easter weekend, many years later, Tommy himself is close to home once again playing "John Brown's Dream: The Devil Is Dead." The local tradition of music on Easter continues, and Tommy sits in a chair in a field a little before sunset at the Union Grove Fiddlers' Convention. He plays for a batch of musicians—young, college-educated, players raised in the city—who have been working on his tunes for several years. They are the first, but certainly not the last, generation of Tommy's apprentices that have not grown up in Round Peak. These young folks are circled around Tommy trying to catch some of the subtleties of his tunes and performance style.

This lively music is taking place on the edge of a throng of people, for by the 1970's Union Grove is drawing 100,000 people from all over the nation. Besides the old timers and revivalist musicians, there are students, tourists, and even bikers and Northerners. Some of us, who hadn't learned to appreciate the tenacity and flexibility of folk traditions, worried that some year, pretty soon, there would be a Union Grove and none of the old timers would come.

There was reason to worry. The Fiddlers' Convention, the reunion, had outgrown its original site at the old grove where the school looked back over the fields toward Pilot Mountain. At the old location, the

gathering was small enough that most people participated in the contest or the parade. In the diversity of the parade, the oxen were perhaps nostalgic reminders of those original settlers who crossed the Blue Ridge at Low Gap. The convention, however, finally grew so big that there had to be three contests, one in the tent, one in the school auditorium, and another in the gym. One fellow's first-place ribbon read: "World Champion Fiddle Player, in the Gym"; another fellow's: "World Champion Fiddle Player, in the Tent." By the last year at the school ground, the crowd grew beyond 6,000 and a young group from New York City won a band prize. But even then, the convention didn't end; it just moved.

As it turns out the old timers are not cut off from their past. We should have realized that the folk find their own ways to honor and preserve their traditions. They remain, in fact, more faithful to the conventions than most of us, for they continue to brave the crowds and enjoy the sightseeing. And we would've realized the old timers' self-direction if we had paid more attention to what happened that Easter weekend.

That particular day the old timers are at Union Grove, in its new location, and Tommy is in the midst of a vast crowd. The strange throng reflects the diversity of the nation, indicates the length and breadth of the travels Tommy makes to music festivals from Washington to New England to the West Coast, and suggests the variety of the homes from which new apprentices travel to visit Tommy. (Some, like Nancy Dols, who drove Tommy down here to Raleigh today, have lived around Mt. Airy for more than a year to learn music from him.) That year the local people of Mt. Airy and the organizers of Union Grove determined to make a particular tribute to their own traditions. On that day, the Union Grove Fiddlers' Convention holds a ceremony to honor Uncle Tommy Jarrell for his contribution to the region's traditions. That Easter Tommy is the focus of attention for his own community, for the festival, and for his growing community of new apprentices.

In these fast moving, often startling times, most of us long for membership in meaningful communities, and perhaps this longing has added to our admiration of folk traditions and their power to bind communities together. Tommy says, "Music is like a wheel. It goes around steady—not steady by jerks, but steady. That's what my Daddy used to say. It goes around like a wheel, like the wheel of a tape recorder, and never misses a beat." Tommy keeps the music going steady, and he keeps many another circle steady, too. He became a central figure among the musicians who were his mentors and who themselves provided a focus for the community on the edge of the Wilderness Trail. He passes the Round Peak music on to his younger

neighbors and his own children and keeps them dancing. More recently, Tommy has become the father of many diverse young apprentices across this country. Tommy's musical traditions and his artistry, his wit and kindness inspire many and continue to join many together.

Today, we are gathered here to thank Tommy for his generosity with his traditions and himself. The North Carolina Folklore Society is pleased to present the Brown-Hudson Award to Thomas Jefferson Jarrell.

NOTES

1. Tommy caught his first tune from Boggy Cockerham, a man hired for one year to help the family make a crop. These quotes are part of my hour radio program "Tommy Jarrell, Round Peak Fiddler," a UNC Folklore Curriculum project, funded by NEA, WUNC-Radio, and the UNC-CH English Dept. The reader may order Tommy's records from him at 734 S. Franklin Road, Mt. Airy, North Carolina 27030. Many visits to Tommy's home, often made with singer Alice Gerrard and enriched by her insights and fun, have inspired these reflections.

Cece Conway played tape recordings of Tommy Jarrell's tales as part of her citation to him at our Society's annual meeting.

2. A feature of Round Peak fiddle-banjo music is a relentless outpouring of notes, many of which are drones. Tommy's stories include several oral devices that maintain the flow of the sound of his voice. He often uses "and," "you know," or "I said" rather than the silent pause, typically marked by a comma or period. For this written transcription, I have included illustrative samples of these devices.

—Cece Conway

Mary Mintz, Richard Lebovitz, Elizabeth Roberson, and Their Students

Oh, burdock, and you other dock,
That have ground coffee for your seeds,
And lovely long thin daisies, dear—
She said that you are weeds!
She said, "Oh, what a fine bouquet!"
But afterwards I heard her say,
"She's always dragging in those weeds."

—Edna St. Vincent Millay,
From a Very Little Sphinx

It has been fifteen years since the *Foxfire* idea first sprouted and bloomed in the north Georgia mountains. Audacious weed! Indeed, it was a nettlesome, uncultivated, showy, stubborn notion that high school students could learn about their language and its arts, their

culture and its history, by publishing a magazine which gave account, in local parlances, of neighbors' arts and ways of living and the histories of kin. Aboundingly prolific, too, this weed. Scores of seedlings from the matured, successful *Foxfire* project fell to fertile ground throughout the fifty states. Some bloomed and never grew again the next year, no less beautiful for their brief lives. Others took perennial pleasure in cropping up again, despite economic climates ill-suited for survival, and with resilience for the cold and arid "whethers" of education experts and cultivated folk-culturists, who wondered aloud and in print if such alternatives to formal classroom education, such amateur folkloristic efforts were worthwhile. By now, student-published magazines of cultural journalism are well established in varietous array. There are second and successive volumes of *Adobe* and *Loblolly*, *Skipjack*, *Tsa' Aszi'*, and *Cityscape*, and harvested anthologies of *Bittersweet* and *Salt* to sit beside six generations of *The Foxfire Book*.

This year, the North Carolina Folklore Society honors the memory of two of its distinguished members, Frank C. Brown and Arthur Palmer Hudson, with citation of the successful, perennial worth of the work of North Carolina elementary and secondary school cultural journalists in the *Foxfire* tradition who, under faculty guidance, look to the past from the present in order to prepare for the future. We are grateful for and prideful of and hereby recognize with this citation the careful collection, study and publication of folklife arts and history by the Hallsboro High School students of Mrs. Mary W. Mintz, who publish *Kin'lin'* magazine in Columbus County; by the Cape Hatteras School students of Richard Lebovitz who publish *Sea Chest* magazine in Dare County; and by the Bear Grass School "Skewarkians," in Martin County, and students of the six-county Alliance for Progress, Experimental Education Project schools in coastal plains North Carolina, who worked under the direction of Mrs. Elizabeth W. Roberson, and who have published a small library of local historical and folklife titles, including *Weird Tales of Martin County* and *Smoke to Gold: The Story of Tobacco in Martin County*.

Perhaps force-bloomed the first time as imitation *Foxfire* publication projects, nevertheless, *Kin'lin'* and *Sea Chest* magazines have long outgrown their seedling stages and are well-established, differentiated species now, each reporting and interpreting distinctively local folkways and cultural concerns.

Mary Mintz and *Kin'lin'* students work in a constellation of communities surrounding Hallsboro High School, including Buckhead, Elbow, Honey Hill, Over Bogue, Red Bug, and Wananish, and they attempt to understand and document the histories and folklife of the multi-ethnic cultural groups which live in the Lake Waccamaw area. *Kin'lin'*, now in its tenth issue, includes oral and document histories of

the persons and events important to the written tradition and to ordinary life in the area. There are historical profiles of Civil War heroes, local educators, midwives, peddler merchants, and the last hanging in Columbus County. One such extended oral historical perspective comprises the *Kin'lin'* Bicentennial edition, and gives sensitive treatment of the once race-segregated Fourth and Sixth of July celebrations of Independence Day.

Kin'lin' collectors report numerous genres of local folklife: weatherlore and beliefs, cures, customs and celebrations, jokes, tall tales, supernatural legends, UFO accounts, folk speech and dialect, place-naming, recitation poetry, folksong, and foodways, as well as a variety of craft skills and folk artistries. As a result of their wide-ranging curiosities, students on the *Kin'lin'* staff are regularly involved with a spectrum of studies other than language arts, history, and folklife. There are articles throughout the *Kin'lin'* pages which called for beginning work in ethnobotany, cartography, archeology, zoology, linguistics, and the geometry and mathematics which underlie graphic illustrations for, among other things, the starting round of a pine needle basket and the folk way of transforming a discarded tire into a container garden.

Kin'lin' students appreciate well the relationships and differences between the spoken and the written word. "Said-Songs," poem-like print versions of the musical, metrical speech of the people of their region, are a prime example of that appreciation. I, who struggle with understanding how best to make the terrible transfer from artful verbal performance to moribund print forms, agree heartily with their editorial choices to pace the reader's eye as he or she would "hear" the telling of a coon hunt:

One night
Me and Ben went coonhunting
In White Marsh Swamp.
Got in there
And we hunted around
About an hour and a half.
We caught two big coons;
The dogs treed another one.
When we cut the tree down
(He was in a hollow tree)
And when it fell across,
It broke in two.
The old coon got out — out
And ran about a hundred and fifty yards,
With the dogs right after him.
Then he turned around
And came right straight back
To the tree where he was running from,
Where we cut it down

With him in it.
He sat down there and backed up
Like he'd run this far
And couldn't run no farther.
The dogs come up there—
And talking about a fight!
But we got him
And he done some bad fighting!

—Mr. Rufus A. Sellers, White Marsh community

Finally, *Kin'lin'* is a communication link for many groups of people in the community. Persons from the Lake Waccamaw area regularly visit the *Kin'lin'* classroom for tape-recorded interviews in which all the students participate, and these in-class projects appear as profiles of "*Kin'lin'* Personalities." Other classes of students at Hallsboro work with folklife projects and the results of their efforts regularly appear in *Kin'lin'* issues. Excerpts from the responses of readers appear in a section called "Shavings," and former students, whose intellectual curiosities were kindled by the *Kin'lin'* experience, submit university-class studied work for publication in the magazine.

Because *Kin'lin'* and *Sea Chest* are both self-sustaining student magazines, much of what each group of publishers is able to do depends directly on reader-subscribed financial support. When disaster occurs, when the printer reports back to the *Sea Chest* operations room that the package containing the copy and layouts for the latest issue of the magazine arrived torn open and missing all the photographs, the life-support readership must be responded to with emergency measures. Reprinted and replacement photographs must be found, new layouts designed, articles rewritten and edited, and production schedules delayed. But life-saving is a folkway in the *Sea Chest* communities along the Outer Banks. The students who salvaged the first number of *Sea Chest's* mail-wrecked New Series are heirs to a long Bankers' tradition of successfully coping with the vagaries of nature as well as the United States Postal Service—a tradition *Sea Chest* commemorated in two special issues, "A History of the United States Life-Saving Service on Hatteras Island" (Winter, 1977), and "Heroes of Hatteras Island" (Bicentennial Edition).

Sea Chest, now in its ninth year of publication, is a prize-winning student effort to reflect current aspects of culture on the Banks as well as a good measure of the area's history in portraits of its people, their ways of living, and their landmarks. It is a handsome portfolio of profiles of the Bankers who do life-saving, quilting, youpon-processing, deer hunting, net-tying, seafood cooking, shipwreck site diving, surfing, wildfowl carving, and a regionally specialized variety of commercial and recreational fishing.

Sea Chest is more than a publication project for experiential learning, though; it is now also a sailskiff whose construction was commissioned and fully documented by the Cape Hatteras students as a grant-funded project in historic preservation, supported, in part, by the National Trust. Built by Michael Scott, a traditional craftsman who took up the students' challenge to reconstruct the historic sail vessel, the "Sea Chest" was originally the idea of Richard Lebovitz, whose "outsider's" perspective made him wonder, from the time he came to Hatteras Island, "Where did all the sailboats go?" His students, in applied folkloristic fashion, helped to answer his curiosity, as well as their own, with the seaworthy "Sea Chest."

Along with their concern for the preservation and documentation of historic folklife and landmarks, the *Sea Chest* students are, perforce, involved with issues current to the changing physical conditions on the Banks. *Sea Chest* magazine has published several articles describing the Cape Hatteras lighthouse and its precarious state of disrepair and vulnerability to destruction by wind and sea. In addition, the social studies class at Cape Hatteras School, in whose numbers were counted *Sea Chest* students, activated their concern for preserving the lighthouse with a petition and placard campaign which they carried to Raleigh in summer, 1981. One poster, illustrated with a likeness of the lighthouse and written in rhyme, was the work of David Midgett, *Sea Chest* and social studies student, and a member in the newest generations of a family whose presence on the Banks has been deeply felt throughout the time the lighthouse has stood.

The Cape Hatteras Lighthouse is not a boat;
Everyone knows it will not float;
Without help it will not stand;
Governor Hunt, please give us a helping hand.

Indeed, *Sea Chest*, like *Kin'lin'* and *Foxfire*, is much more than a fine example of student cultural journalism. It is a process, a way of learning, a way of teaching, an important way of being involved with knowledge and art and life beyond the library walls and outside the classroom.

Anyone who has worked with Elizabeth Roberson knows she is an enthusiastic and encouraging teacher, one whose influence on students of cultural journalism, history, and folklife by now has spread through six of the eastern counties in North Carolina. Elizabeth began in Bear Grass with her eighth grade students who formed "The Skewarkians" Junior Historian Club in 1975. Those students worked with a succession of focused issues for research in local history and folklife, each year presenting their results in some form which could be shared with the community and looked to with a sense of accomplishment by the students. During her four years with the Bear Grass School students,

"The Skewarkians" produced a collection of slides of historic sites in Martin County; two 8mm films, one depicting the culture of the Tuscarora Indians in eastern North Carolina and one dealing with Martin County during the Civil War; a slide-tape program of illustrated supernatural legends collected in the county; a book form of that legend collection, *Weird Tales of Martin County*; and *Smoke to Gold: The Story of Tobacco in Martin County*.

In 1980-81, Mrs. Roberson took her ideas for experiential learning "on the road." Working from a base in the offices of the Albermarle region Alliance for Progress, Elizabeth Roberson helped direct thirty other teachers and their students in ten schools on projects involving local history and folklife in the six counties of the Alliance: Hertford, Martin, Bertie, Chowan, Perquimans, and Gates. Those Experimental Education Project students, too, worked in the field with tape recorders, 35mm cameras, 8mm movie equipment, tape measures and notepads to document a variety of traditions and aspects of local history, including the Civil War period in Hertford County, historic toys and amusements, traditional hog butchery, the operation of a river current automated "fishing machine," and a comparison of historic and contemporary school traditions. And the cultural journalism *Foxfire* "idea" flowered again in Hertford, Bertie, and Chowan counties.

Peggy Lowe's fifth grade Vann School Junior Historians, in Ahoskie, published a collection of *People, Places, and Things of Hertford County* using transcribed materials from their group interviews with some of the oldest members of their community—retired educators, grand-kin, and craftspersons, like the ingenious C.W. Swain, whose skills as a blacksmith and inventor were the focus of an interview and report by the team of William Leary, Brien Lassiter, and Neil Barnes.

Kathy Bickford's eighth grade journalism class at Bertie Junior High School compiled a 34-page *Tuck-A-Hoe* profile of folklife in the county which is both sophisticated in its folklife purview and so well written as to evoke for the reader the actual circumstances of many of the *in situ* interviews. *Tuck-A-Hoe* includes memorates of local natural disasters, cornshuck flower-making, aspects of traditional and early clinical medical practices, supernatural narratives, tall tales, foodways, and a "Feathers 'n Stuff" feature by Connie Williams and Kimberly Doyle on the work of a Colrain taxidermist.

Winston Dail's Chowan High School journalism class published three numbers of *Chowanoc*, an historical/folk-cultural series in which oral sources were used to map the "old" settlement at Small's Crossroads, to understand domestic wine-making, to recall the historic culture of Quakers in the area, to understand the etymologies of local

place names, and to treat the “mysterious” subject of folk medicine. Darlene Saunders’ introduction to her “Home Remedies” piece in *Chowanoc*, 1:2, illustrates the kind of interpretive work these students have done, management and analysis of their materials beyond the mechanics of field recording and transcribed reportage.

Folk medicine is the medicine or remedies developed by the common people. People use these household antidotes because they sometimes work and are handy when a doctor is not readily available.

Basically, there are two types of remedies. Some commonly used remedies are homemade medicines, herbs, dirty socks, and others. There are some people who believe in or resort to supernatural remedies, like relying on magic or some supernatural belief to take effect or cure.

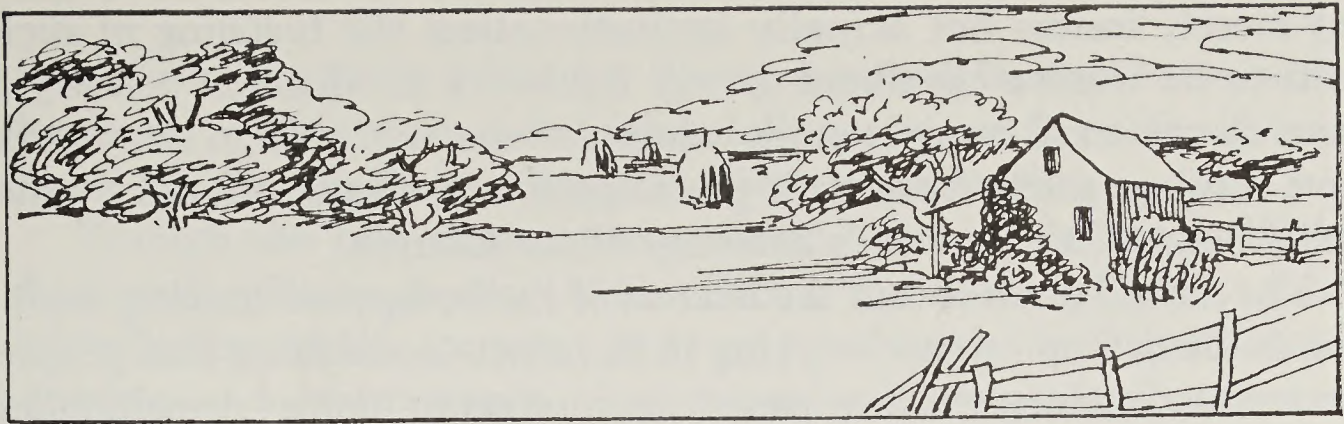
This “bouquet” Brown-Hudson citation celebrates the future of folklife scholarship in North Carolina, rather than its history. In the names of these three committed and inspiring teachers—Mary Mintz, Richard Lebovitz, and Elizabeth Roberson—and in the published efforts of *Kin’lin’*, *Sea Chest*, “Skewarkians,” and Alliance for Progress Experimental Education Project students and teachers, the North Carolina Folklore Society offers its most distinguished recognition of folklife studies in the newest generation of scholars, in whose fieldwork and reporting there is yet no fear of thorns or prickly thistles.

All the grown-up people say,
“What, those ugly thistles?
Mustn’t touch them! Keep away!
Prickly! Full of bristles!”

Yet they never make me bleed
Half so much as roses!
Must be purple is a weed,
And pink and white is posies.

—Edna St. Vincent Millay
From a Very Little Sphinx.

—Karen Baldwin,
East Carolina University



The 1981 Student Contest

by Polly Stewart

It was a pleasure to have served as judge of the 1981 *North Carolina Folklore Journal* student essay contest. Both of the winning entries are well written and enjoyable to read, and are fine examples of much-needed primary research in folklore.

The undergraduate essay, "Annie Watson: An Appalachian Knotted Bedspread Maker," by Lark A. Shea, provides an able and detailed description of the tools and techniques involved in the making of knotted bedspreads in Deep Gap, North Carolina, and it further shows how the craft functions in the life of that community. To my mind, the essay serves to point up important theoretical considerations about folklife in general and about Appalachian folklife in particular. The first is that the transmission of traditional skills is deliberate and self-conscious, though some instances are more obvious than others. Mrs. Watson is a case in point. While she learned the craft from older generations of women in her own family—learned it vertically, as it were—she found it necessary to seek out the women in her church to teach it to—a horizontal process. A happy offshoot of such lateral transmission is the cohesive effect it has had on the community as a whole. And what could be better for tying a community together than a knotted-bedspread tradition?

Of course the transmission of handwork traditions through the agency of a church or other community organization is not exclusive to Deep Gap. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints [Mormon]

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not merely fosters but actually institutionalizes the teaching of such skills to its women members. In my fieldwork in Mormon country I have encountered many women whose interest and skill in handwork have resulted solely from their participation in classes offered by the Relief Society, the women's auxiliary of the Church.

The second point is that the bearers of the bedspread-making tradition in Deep Gap are not working in isolation—something that people are inclined to forget if they permit themselves to look at Appalachian folklife romantically or nostalgically. For while a very few knotted bedspreads find their way into Deep Gap homes, by far the greater number of them are exported; part of the community's life is thus sustained by an outside market. Moreover, as the essay points out, this exporting has been going on for many decades and was in fact initiated by well-to-do outsiders. Ironically, these two points are interlocking: even as the craft tradition helps keep the community intact in an age of outside incursions, it simultaneously depends upon the outside for its very existence.

The graduate essay, “‘The Following Veracious Anecdote’: Folklore in the *Asheville News*, 1854-55,” by Pamela Upton, will be of interest to the journalist as well as to the folklorist, for its author makes comparisons between Then and Now with regard to newspaper organization, resources, and intent. In those days there was no explicit line between reporting and editorializing, no departmentalizing, no overt announcement of distinctions between reportage and traditional narrative—or between tongue-in-cheek and serious. The author further suggests that, because of the absence of wire services or airwave media, nineteenth-century newspapers were more likely to have to cater to community tastes and values than newspapers of today, or at least felt freer to do so. These considerations make for an interesting and sometimes hilarious search through the pages of an older publication, the *Asheville News*. The author identifies and discusses a number of traditional narratives and shows, among other things, how the editor modified them on occasion to suit his own taste (or what he may have believed to be the taste of the community served by his newspaper). For example, he gave a new ending and a moralizing, ironic comment to a Greedy Lawyer narrative, which is found in the oral tradition without them.

Among the narratives presented is the famous Lazy Man (“Is it shelled?”) joke, which crops up all over the English-speaking world. My own mother has this joke in her repertoire—a discovery I made only this past summer—and I have heard or seen versions of it from many parts of the United States. Margaret Mead even reports it in her autobiography, *Blackberry Winter*, as one of the stories she learned as a small child. To find a text dating back to 1854, as in this instance, is

indeed exciting to the folklorist. Researchers will be even better served, however, when this and the other folk narratives from the *Asheville News* are classified according to tale-type and motif.

Though the two winning essays could scarcely be more different from each other in content, their effect is the same. Each is a valuable contribution to the growing body of scholarship that elucidates the shaping and maintenance of community cohesion and community taste.



Cratis D. Williams Prize 1981

“The Following Veracious Anecdote...” Folklore in the *Asheville News*, 1854-55

by Pamela Upton

How goes it now, sir? this news which is called true is so
like an old tale, that the verity of it is in strong suspicion.

—*A Winter's Tale*,
Act V, Scene 2

The *Asheville, N.C., News*, published from 1849-69, edited for most of that time by Thomas Atkin, is an undistinguished newspaper, but it is a notable one; it is ordinary and yet special. Issues are a hodgepodge of seemingly unrelated articles, features, advertisements, and anecdotes, but they are also a clear blueprint of the society which the *News* both served and informed. It is full of irrelevant and often uninteresting (to the present-day reader, at least) details, but it is a treasure-trove for folklorists. Hundreds of other newspapers like it stand neatly coiled on microfilm rolls in libraries and archives across the country, awaiting their discovery by some enterprising scholar. This essay will examine some of the uses folklorists can make of such unmined fields, using as illustrations material culled from the *Asheville News* for the years 1854-55. Those years were selected in part because they are the first years for which almost all issues have been preserved, and partly because they are the last years in which the *News* displayed

Pam Upton is a student in the curriculum in folklore at the University of North Carolina, where she wrote this paper for a seminar with Charles Zug, III.

a markedly informal, "folksy" character. After 1855, political concerns became more and more important, gradually displacing the tales, anecdotes, and other items of amusement which had before filled most of the pages.

The typical antebellum newspaper looks strange to modern eyes which are accustomed to the terse, "news at a glance" format of today's journalism.¹ Today, the press is committed (in theory if not in practice) to the presentation of "news" in a straightforward, unembellished, unbiased manner, and our judgment of whether or not it has accomplished this aim is formed to a large extent by the journalistic jargon used. We are upset if an editor adds moralizing commentary to an article or trifles with our attentions by printing a palpably fictitious story as true. We have neatly compartmentalized our newspapers, desiring our news in one section, sports information in another, entertainment in yet another, and so on. Most antebellum papers made no such distinctions. If an item was newsworthy, then genre was of no consequence; the only criterion determining its placement within the paper was the degree of interest it was likely to hold for readers. Thus, in the *Asheville News*, a reader can find on the front page the lurid and sensational account of a woman's premonitory dream vying for attention with an account of the latest doings in Congress or complete listing of new postal routes (Fig. 1).

In one other respect the antebellum press was vastly different from that of the present day. There existed then no wire services to standardize news and to link papers from varying parts of the country.² There were also none of the modern sources of amusement such as television, radio, and movies, all of which involve their listeners or viewers, to some extent, in a global network of shared experience. In the absence of such resources, it was the function of the newspaper to provide its readers with not only the latest news, but also with entertainment. The responses of individual papers to the demands thus placed upon them differed according to the dictates of their respective communities. Each local paper was bound within the confines of its area of circulation—that is, within its local community. A paper might receive exchanges from different areas which were then reprinted and even passed off as local items, but the selection of such pilferings was bound to be influenced by community standards and community opinion, arbiters by which such publications lived or died.

Under such conditions, it is not surprising that the editor played a very important role; most papers published at this time clearly bear their editor's individualistic stamp. A successful editor was almost certainly one who was in close touch with his community—usually a comfortably situated, middle-class citizen who had contact with all elements of society. He was aware of his responsibility to provide infor-

mation and entertainment for a diverse group of readers. Unfortunately, it is extremely difficult to find biographical data on most of these solid citizens, except in the rare instances when they attained the stature of a William T. Porter or a Horace Greeley. In the absence of concrete data, however, we can learn much about these men's characters through an examination of their newspapers. In fact, one of the most intriguing problems which faces the folklorist working with newspaper materials is that of determining the effect the editor's character had on the way he presented the folklore which appeared in his paper.

The amount of folklore material found in papers of this period is quite large, if one can judge by the few studies done of particular newspapers.³ It increases further if we include in our definition of folk narrative those items which, though not actually encompassing traditional forms or motifs, are nevertheless related to folk beliefs or customs, or which represent a trend that involved folk as well as popular culture. In this category we may include such things as advertisements for wonder drugs, examples of spiritualism or parapsychology, and tales revolving around local characters or events. These latter might be viewed as memorates, requiring only a further period of circulation and the acquisition of traditional motifs to become genuine folktales. Unfortunately, very little has ever been done with this mass of material. There have been a few studies done of specific newspapers, of which the most noteworthy is probably Eston Ericson's examination of the Tarboro, N.C., *Free Press*.⁴ On the whole, though, most of these articles have concentrated on identifying what folklore is contained in the papers and classifying it by genre, then printing several pages of sample entries. While this is, of course, a necessary preliminary step, there is much more that can be done with newspaper folklore.

One possible area for further investigation would be the role of newspapers as "active bearers" of tradition. It is obvious that the press carried many traditional stories, often even developing "repertories" which were reprinted over and over.⁵ If a newspaper could pick up stories from oral circulation, print them and send them through the exchanges to different papers around the country, then it must have frequently happened that stories printed from the exchanges were adopted into oral tradition.

Another possibility is to treat the newspaper accounts as literary representations of folklore and to study the changes made in the narratives either to give them a moral twist or to put them in a more "polished" or acceptable literary style. The author of one article on newspaper humor has even suggested that a newspaper version of a folktale is probably a fuller specimen than one from oral tradition,

because of the literary demands of the printed account.⁶ This assertion should be viewed warily, however, as the debate over printed versus oral sources for the "best" version of a tale goes all the way back to the Grimms, and seems no closer to resolution.

The discovery of a certain folktale in the pages of a newspaper constitutes excellent proof that the tale was in current circulation at the date the paper was printed and that it had a certain form at that time. While such dating will not tell us how long before printing the story had been told in the area, it does give us a date, later than which we can be certain that the tale did not originate.

Probably one of the most profitable applications of newspaper folklore, and one more within the scope of the present paper, is its use to throw light on the society in which it circulated. Given the close interaction between newspaper, editor, and community, the items which appeared in a paper were bound to reflect not only the types of folktales current at a given time, but also the meanings that they had for the community. True, a printed folktale lacks the contextual situation which folklorists often use to assess meaning, but in newspaper accounts there are three criteria which can be used to compensate for the loss of context. First, in what literary style is the tale told? Second, is the tale given a moral or edifying twist? And third, where is it placed in the paper? In my study of the *Asheville News*, I began with the assumption that a tale given a prominent place on the first page had a deeper meaning for the community (or, indirectly, for the editor who, in turn, was responsive to the community) than one used as a filler on the third or fourth page. I soon discovered a direct correlation between these important front-page items and both an ornate style and the addition of a moral. Stories used as obvious fillers were generally much less elaborately constructed, nor were they told with a specific lesson in mind.

Before proceeding to an analysis of folk narrative in the *Asheville News*, however, it would be well to take a brief look at the society in which it circulated and the editor who controlled its early life. Asheville, N.C., in 1854 was a small but vigorous town, the seat of Buncombe County and already one of the more important towns in the western part of the state. It had been settled longer than most of the surrounding countryside, having been incorporated in 1797.⁷ Its settlers, though precipitate, were largely of the same mixture as their later neighbors, being mostly Scots-Irish, with some Germans who had migrated from Pennsylvania down through the valley of Virginia and so into the Carolinas. More than likely the men who settled the area had first seen the land while in service during the Revolutionary War, returning at the war's close with their families and goods. Their little town, originally called Morristown, then changed to Asheville in honor

of then governor Samuel Ashe (this in 1797), quickly became a center for settlers arriving in the mountains and also the point of convergence for several west-bound roads leading into the wilderness.⁸ Among those who travelled these roads were a substantial number of ministers riding circuits through the mountains of North Carolina and Tennessee. The Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists were especially well represented, and from its earliest days Asheville bore the traces of a strong religious influence.⁹

The other great formative influence on the town was its development as a resort, both for summer visitors seeking respite from the lowland heat and for tubercular patients attracted by the clean, salutary air of the mountains. This development was facilitated by the completion of the Buncombe Turnpike, linking Greenville, S.C., with Greeneville, Tenn., in 1828 and the beginning of stagecoach transportation shortly thereafter.¹⁰ The annual influx of visitors insured that Asheville did not remain isolated from outside contact, in contrast to many of the surrounding coves.

Far from becoming a cosmopolitan niche in the western section of the state, however, Asheville seemed to strike a balance between sophistication and simplicity. Education was always a high priority. The first school was opened in 1793 by Robert Henry, and the town also had one of the first female schools in the state, which boasted as one of its teachers Elizabeth Blackwell, who later became the United States' first woman doctor.¹¹ On the other side of the fence, however, Asheville retained a close association with the land. The predominant occupation was farming, and throughout the early nineteenth century most residents followed the soil, even when they also pursued careers as businessmen or ministers.¹²

The issues of the Civil War did not, by and large, touch the mountain community very closely. Slavery was never a critical concern in the Asheville area. One source estimates the black population at less than 20%, most of these personal or house servants. Very few mountain farms were large enough to be dependent on slave labor.¹³ Nevertheless, prevalent Southern attitudes towards Yankees and Northern interference held sway there, as shown by the contents of various editorials and by several vicious anti-Yankee anecdotes which were printed in the *News*.

It is more difficult to find information about the editor of the *News* than about the community he served.¹⁴ Thomas W. Atkin is listed in the 1850 census for Buncombe County as an adult male, age 27, whose occupation is that of printer and editor and whose household consists of a wife and four children, a printer's assistant, and a young woman who is presumably a servant. His place of birth is given as Tennessee. From a compilation of marriage and death notices from Asheville papers, we

learn that Thomas Atkin and Harriet Thompson, both of Knoxville, Tenn., were married in Knoxville in 1843. The couple lost a small son in 1856, and in 1859 Harriet Atkin also passed away.¹⁵ Beyond these bare facts it is necessary to deduce any further biographical details from Atkin's paper itself or from other secondary sources. We may assume that he was born (or at least raised) in Knoxville, an area similar in many respects to western North Carolina. It is possible that he had some contact with the editor of the earliest Asheville paper, the *Highland Messenger*, and that this is what prompted him to come to Asheville and start his own weekly.¹⁶ Harriet Atkin's obituary lists her husband as "Rev. Thomas Atkin," which would seem to show that Atkin was one of those who doubled in his occupations. He was not a wealthy man (the 1850 census values his estate at \$1200) in relation to others in the area, but he was able to afford a servant and an assistant at his press. His editorials show him to be an avid Confederate sympathizer, and the suspension of publication of the *News* from 1860 to 1864 suggests that Atkin may have fought with the Confederate forces, a position certainly consistent with his editorial viewpoint. An even fuller picture of the man's character, however, is revealed by an examination of the contents of his newspaper—in particular the numerous tales and anecdotes contained in it.

Most of the narratives found in the Asheville *News* conform to the pattern revealed by studies of other papers. The majority are humorous, and within this category most are what one scholar calls "instructive humor." In his article on antebellum humor in Ohio, George Kummer groups this instructive humor under three headings: first, "stories exploiting the oddities of atypical individuals"; second, tall tales; and third, anecdotes told to make a point.¹⁷ By stretching the first category to include puns and anecdotes based on racial or sexual stereotypes, we have a neat description of the material from the *News*. A brief overview of this material reveals fourteen ethnic jokes or tales, ten tales about lawyers or the law, eight preacher tales, eleven local character anecdotes, five tall tales, and seven tales about drinking or drunks. This does not include the numerous moralistic vignettes, pseudo-scientific discoveries, or patented cure-alls that were highly touted in every issue. Also, my categorization is probably too rigid, as elements in many of the tales overlap into several classifications, as will be seen shortly. Three main themes, however, are clearly discernible—the vast majority of items deal, in one way or another, with drunkenness, religion, or the law.

Of the anecdotes dealing with members of an ethnic group, all but two are about either Negroes or Irishmen or Jews. One item, entitled "Go It, Bob-Tail," is mentioned in connection with other collections, and thus can be put down as an import from the exchanges.¹⁸ Another

tells of an Indian who, after getting drunk in town, freezes to death on the way home. His tribe concludes that he had too much water mixed in with the whiskey and this had frozen inside him and killed him. The Irish jokes all hinge on the Irishman's supposed overwhelming fondness for drink and the scrapes into which this gets him. In one case a dying Irishman tells his wife that she'll know he's truly dead when he doesn't respond to a proffered glass.

An Irishman had been sick a long time, and while in this state, would occasionally quit breathing, and life would be apparently extinct for some time, when he would come to. On one of these occasions when he had just awakened out of his sleep, his wife asked him: "An how'll we know, Jemmy, when ye're dead? ye're after wakin' up ivery time?" "Bring me a glass of grog, an' say to me, 'here's to ye, Jemmy,' an' if I don't rise and drink, then bury me." (Oct. 12, 1854)

Jokes about blacks are curiously lifeless, given the time in which they were printed. An incident is related in which the black man, asked how old he is, replies that he is twenty-five, but that if he counted all the living he had seen, he'd have to say seventy-five. In another tale a white preacher who takes pleasure in kissing all the brides at weddings he performs is asked what he does when he marries a Negro couple; he answers that in that case, he lets the deacon take over. It is hard to imagine that either of these examples ever convulsed readers with laughter. On the other hand, the gentle, almost affectionate tone of the anecdotes suggests a relaxed, unfearful attitude towards the black race.

The anecdotes about Jews are not humorous ones either, but rather show respect for their subjects. Even the Irish tales, while they are generally more witty than the other pieces and are slightly more derogatory towards Paddy, have a good-natured, even affectionate note in them, and they never depict the Irishman as a moron. From this evidence we might conclude that Asheville's homogeneous population and the low concentration in that area of any ethnic groups, including blacks, eliminated the feeling of threat which often puts a cutting edge on ethnic tales.

Lawyers and the law do not escape so easily. In many tales printed in the *News*, the lawyer is the butt of a joke, or some telling comment is made about either his avarice or his incompetence. An example is "The Lawyer and the Poor Man."

A lawyer at Poughkeepsie was applied to during his lifetime by an indigent neighbor for his opinion on a question of law in which the interests of the latter were materially involved. The lawyer gave his advice and charged the poor fellow three dollars for it.

"There is the money," said his client, "it is all I have in the world, and my family has been a long time without pork."

"Thank God," replied the lawyer. "My wife never knew the want of pork since we were married."

"Nor will she," the countryman rejoined, "so long as she has such a great hog as you."

The lawyer was so well pleased with the smartness of his repartee that he forgave the poor fellow and returned him his money.

We believe all but the last part. (Nov. 30, 1854)

Another joke equates lawyers with the Devil's disciples. A visitor from London, observing a funeral, asks who is being buried. On being informed that it is a lawyer, he asserts that in his country there is never any need to bury lawyers. Instead, they are simply left overnight in a room, and the next morning the bodies are gone, leaving behind only a sharp smell of brimstone.

Ministers generally fare no better than lawyers in avoiding satire. One is openly billed as a "Poor Prospect," in the title of the following anecdote.

An itinerant preacher recently traveled among the northwestern counties in this state. He was mounted on an animal whose appearance betokened very bad keeping, the mere frame-work of what had once been a horse. Riding up to the door of a country inn, he inquired of the landlord the distance to the next town. The host, coming out, was so forcibly struck with the appearance of the animal upon which the querist sat, that he walked around him twice before giving the required information. He then inquired:

"Who might you be, if it is a fair question?"

"I am a follower of the Lord," he answered.

"Follerin' of the Lord, eh?" demanded the host.

"Well, I'll tell you what it is, old feller, (eyeing the horse again) there's one thing sartin, if you stop often on the road, you'll never ketch him with that horse." (Aug. 24, 1854)

And in "Put That Rascal Out!" an unimaginative preacher proves unable to take some imaginative criticism.

While the congregation were collected at church, on a certain occasion, an old dark, hard-featured, skin and bone individual was seen wending his way up the aisle, and taking his seat near the pulpit. The officiating minister was one of that class who detested written sermons, and as for prayers he thought they ought to be the natural outpourings of the heart. After the singing was concluded, the house as usual was called to prayer. The genius we have introduced did not kneel, but leaned his head devotionally on the back of his pew. The minister began by saying:

"Father of all, in every age, by saint and by savage adored."

"Pope," said a low but clear voice near old hard features.

The minister, after casting an indignant look in the direction of the noise, continued:

"Whose throne sitteth on the adamantine hills of Paradise."

"Milton," again interrupted the voice.

The minister's lips quivered for a moment, but recovering himself, he began: "We thank thee most gracious father, that we are permitted once more to assemble in thy name, while other equally meritorious, but less favored, have been carried beyond that bourne from whence no traveller returns."

"Shakespeare," interrupted the voice.

This was too much. "Put that impudent rascal out," shouted the minister.

"Original," ejaculated the voice, in the same calm but reproving manner.

Preachers, however, can sometimes turn the tables on their antagonists, while the lawyers never do. One anecdote entitled "A Georgia Wedding" pokes fun at both professions by using familiar legal jargon in a situation normally considered religious.

The preacher was prevented from taking his part in the ceremony, and a newly created Justice of the Peace, who happened to be present, was called upon to officiate in his place. The good man's knees began to tremble, for he had never tied the knot, and did not know where to begin. He had no "Georgia Justice," or any other book from which to read the marriage service. The company was arranged in a semi-circle, each one bearing a tallow candle. He thought over everything he had learned, even to—

"Thirty days hath September,
April, June, and November"

but all in vain, he could recollect nothing that suited the occasion. A suppressed titter all over the room admonished him that he must proceed with something, and in an agony of desperation he began:

"Know all men by these presents, that I—" here he paused and looked up at the ceiling, while a voice in the corner of the room was heard to say—

"He is drawing a deed for a tract of land," and they all laughed.

"In the name of God, amen!" he began again, only to hear another voice in a loud whisper say—

"He is making his will; I thought he couldn't live long, he looks so powerfully bad."

"Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray—"

was the next essay, when some erudite gentleman remarked—

"He is not dead, but sleepeth."

"Oh, yes! Oh, yes!" continued the Squire.

A voice replied: "Oh, no! Oh, no! don't let's."

Some person out of doors sung out, "Come into Court" and the laughter was general. The bride was near fainting, the Squire was not far from it; but being an indefatigable man, he began again—

"To all and singular, the sher—"

"Let's run, he's going to levy on us," said two or three at once.

Here a gleam of light flashed across the Squire's face; he ordered the bride and groom to hold up their hands, and in a solemn voice said—

"You, and each of you, do solemnly swear in the presence of the present company, that you will perform towards each other all and singular, the functions of husband and wife, as the case may be, to the best of your knowledge and ability, so help you God."

"Good as wheat," exclaimed the father of the bride. (Sept. 14, 1854)

If Thomas Atkin was indeed a minister himself, then he shows a generous sense of humor in printing stories which expose the idiosyncracies of his own calling. Perhaps the fact that so many professional men in the mountains also doubled as farmers saved them from becoming too stuffy and helped them maintain a clear-headed distance from their work.

There are several tales which, although they would fit into one of the other categories well enough, I have chosen to call character tales. These stories relate amusing incidents involving men or women well-

known to the readers, whether their reputation is national or merely local. In all cases, the story's impact depends on audience familiarity with the subject's character. One of the best examples of such a tale is the "Anecdote of Peter Cartwright," the famous circuit preacher reputed to have whipped Mike Fink and forced him to pray, while at the same time instructing him how. In Atkin's variant Andy Jackson feels the preacher's scorn.

While he was preaching, years ago, General Jackson entered the Church, when a pastor seated in the pulpit gave his "Brother Cartwright" a nudge, and whispered that the old hero had just come in, as much as to advise "now be particular what you say." But Peter, to the astonishment of everyone, louder than ever exclaimed—"Who cares for General Jackson? He'll go to hell as soon as anybody if he don't repent."

When the sermon—a home made one—was ended, a friend asked the General what he thought of that rough old fellow, and received for an answer: "Sir, give me twenty thousand such men and I'll whip the world including the devil." (Aug. 3, 1854)

Cartwright's exploits were the subject of many a choice feature in papers around the country, so that the knowledge of his bellicose temperament would make the story of his altercation with General Jackson all the more delicious.¹⁹ Interestingly enough, under the guise of a character tale, complete with a detailed setting and many protestations of veracity, we find "Lazy Joe Harvey," which is nothing but the familiar folktale about the man too lazy to grind his own corn or chew his own food.²⁰

In the pleasant and romantic village of C——, in which the writer of the following veracious anecdote was cast for some months, there resides, or did reside, a person who delighted in the name of drunkenness and laziness, but more particularly in the latter, as his total disinclination to any exertion frequently restrained him from procuring those beverages which delighted his soul.

During fine weather, Joe was to be seen either hanging about the village tavern, or sleeping under some tree around which he would diurnally revolve to protect himself from the rays of the sun as it travelled across the heavens. In winter, he would take refuge in the poor-house, and cause the county to support its most reckless inhabitant, until the return of spring made his leafy couches again available.

Upon one occasion, Joe having partaken freely of mine host's good whiskey, had betaken himself to his customary tree and was in a few minutes in a heavy sleep. Now it happened that the spirit of mischief, after hovering awhile over C——, had lighted in the bar-room before alluded to, and had taken particular lodging in the brain of Major B——, seeing Joe snoring "sub tegmine fugi," proposed to his friends that they should take and bury him, as he was of no further use to himself, his family, or anyone else—but on the contrary, a tax to everyone.

The suggestion was immediately acted on. To go to the undertakers, procure a coffin, and put in it the unconscious body of their victim, was but the work of an instant; and then, as newspapers say, the mournful cortege proceeded.

On the way, they were met by a neighboring wealthy farmer, who asked whom they were about burying.

"Joe Harvey," said the Major.

"Why, is old Joe dead at last?"

"No, he's not dead, but we are going to bury him, to put him out of the way before winter sets in."

"Oh," said the farmer, "don't do that, let him go a little longer, and I'll give him enough corn to keep him until spring."

At these words the sleeping form was seen to move, and the languid, maudlin features of old Joe emerged slowly from the level of the coffin. His half-peeled eyes revealed two blood-shot balls which seemed to fall loosely in the direction of his noble interceder; then mustering all his energy, in a tone scarcely above a whisper, he enquired:

"Is your corn shelled?"

"No," was the dead response.

"Then," said Joe, unhesitatingly, as he relapsed into his coffin, "*tote along the corpse.*" (Mar. 9, 1854)

The most fascinating of the stories in the *News* are the tall tales. Though these appear infrequently, they are always slipped in so slyly (often between two items of "real" news) that it often takes the reader several moments to realize that he or she has been duped. Contrary to the usual literary representation of tall tales, which exaggerates the situation so hugely that it practically hits the reader over the head, the *News* closely copies the oral style. The tales are related as nearly dead-pan as newsprint can manage; only the ludicrousness of the situation finally alerts the audience. The variety of tales is wide for such a small collection. In "Too Tough," a tree grows from a man's walking cane.

The Catoctin (Maryland) *Whig* makes the following statement:

"At this office may be seen for a few days a rare curiosity in the shape of a cane, which was used for many years by John M. Neal, esq., and which he stuck in the ground on his farm, three miles northeast of Middleton (now the property of Jacob Michael, esq.) about forty-five years ago—the cane commenced growing, and in a short time a thick coat of bark was formed around it, and having been carefully trimmed, grew up and increased in dimensions to the height of ninety feet. The tree, after having withstood the blasts of forty-five years, yielded up its vitality, and was cut down by Mr. Michael a few weeks ago. In splitting up the first cut, the identical cane, as first planted, dropped from the centre of the log, just the same as it was when planted forty-five years ago." (June 8, 1854)

Another tale involves the unnatural mothering effects of a cat.

A cat belonging to a widow lady in Ohio has lately set upon half a dozen of duck eggs, and continued her attention until the eggs were hatched, and there is now a fine brood of six young ones, half duck and half cat, having duck heads and cat tails, but what is more wonderful they mew and quack alternately. (Sept. 7, 1854)

Others tell of a miser in Lyons, France, who fed his favorite cat by greasing it down good once a week and then letting it lick itself clean, and of Texas centipedes which are extraordinarily huge and poisonous.²¹

Sometimes stories appear which appear to be just curious local anecdotes. Such a one is the "Learned Elephant," about an animal which had been trained to take money from curious spectators and place it in a pot high overhead; however, he had never learned to return it.²² The tale becomes much more significant when one realizes that stories of con animals working with their masters were in common circulation during the period. The kind of animal and the item stolen might differ, but the basic form of the tale was unchanging.²³ Other stories traded about the exchanges involved instances of precognition, supernatural animals (snakes were especially popular subjects), and satires on the lives and customs of Westerners. One passage states that people on the prairies don't die, they just dry up and blow away. Those who want to die like Easterners have to move downriver.²⁴

By far the largest assortment of tales, however, are those which deal in some way with drinking and drunkenness. These can be humorous recitals such as that of the drunk who falls over, then pretends he was knocked down by a thunderclap; a fable telling how Satan fertilized the newly-planted grapevine with the blood of a lamb, lion, ape, and pig in succession, these being ever after the animals man resembles in successive stages of intoxication; or even a well-known folktale about the cat who saves a mouse from drowning in a vat of beer.

An exchange says the following story was told by a reformed inebriate, as an apology for much of the folly of drunkards:

A mouse ranging about a brewery, happening to fall into a vat of beer, was in imminent danger of drowning, and applied to a cat to help him out. The cat replied—

"It is a foolish request, for as soon as I get you out I shall eat you."

The mouse piteously replied, "That fate would be better than to be drowned in beer."

The cat lifted him out, but the fume of the beer caused puss to sneeze, and the mouse took refuge in his hole. The cat called upon the mouse to come out—

"You, sir, did you not promise that I could eat you?"

"Ah," replied the mouse, "but you know I was in liquor at the time."

(Oct. 5, 1854)

All of the stories convey disapproval of those who indulge in alcohol. The drinker may be treated humorously, but he is consistently shown up either as an object for ridicule or as the recipient of a just and terrible retribution.

Having now presented a very sketchy introduction to the folklore narrative material printed in the *Asheville News*, what conclusions can we draw as to the character of the community in which it circulated? First of all, the number of narratives printed would suggest that such material was familiar to the residents, and that there was probably a thriving oral tradition in the area which both provided inspiration for some of the newspaper articles and dictated the style in which many

were written. Those stories that appear to have been printed solely as entertainment imitate an oral style, while those told to make a point (usually the evils of drinking) display a much more ornate handling. These are the front-page articles such as "Lazy Joe Harvey," the cat and mouse tale, and the examples of spiritualism or deeds of mayhem that formed the most popular reading topics of the day. The general lack of pointed ethnic tales suggests that race and nationality were not burning issues in this quiet mountain community; about the strongest feelings expressed are repeated exhortations to temperance. There is a great delight in humor, particularly that which pokes fun at sedate occupations such as the law and the ministry. Nevertheless, a healthy reverence is indicated by the fact that ministers and preachers are rarely made to look totally ridiculous, and they often turn the tables on their scoffers. Many of the anecdotes contain topical humor whose folkloristic content is difficult to evaluate. There are many slights to women ("The cradle is the ballot box for a woman, in which she should deposit her voter, but not votes.") indicating that Ashevilleans, at least those with the power to influence what went into the paper, were not ardent supporters of Susan B. Anthony. Much punning occurs, also, though it mostly takes a literary turn, along the following lines:

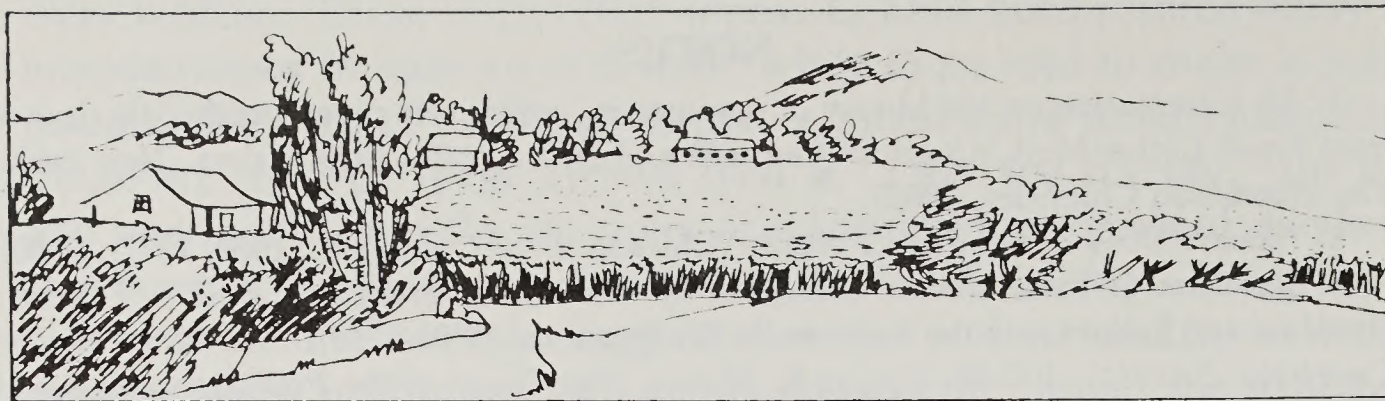
Buss, to kiss; rebuss, to kiss again; pluribuss, to kiss without regard to sex; silly buss, to kiss the hand instead of the lips; blunder buss, to kiss the wrong person; omnibuss, to kiss all the persons in the room; erubuss, to kiss in the graveyard or in the dark; buss the boiler, to kiss the cook. (Nov. 9, 1854)

This could reflect the educational level which was slightly higher in Asheville than in the surrounding areas, or it could be an indication of a beginning snobbishness among middle- and upper-class citizens whose tastes were influenced by more cosmopolitan summer visitors.

The material examined in this paper represents, of course, only one facet of the Asheville *News*. It is designed to show the existence of a flourishing folkloric tradition reflected in newspaper narratives. While Asheville, even in the 1850's, could by no means be classified as a "folk" society, the *News* makes clear that it could and did avail itself of traditional material for its entertainment. I hope that this study has elucidated some of the possibilities inherent in newspaper folklore, which expresses as well as any written source can the vitality of traditions in its area. In the pages of these long-neglected papers we see "the reflection of a whole people enjoying the foibles and idiosyncrasies present in all their major fields of activity; the religious, the social, the professional, and the domestic."²⁵

NOTES

1. All information on the history of newspapers, unless otherwise specified, is drawn from Frank Luther Mott, *American Journalism: A History 1690-1960*, 3rd ed. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962).
2. Richard Dorson, *American Folklore* (Chicago: U. of Chicago P., 1959, 1977), p. 50.
3. The best of these studies examined by this author are Eston Everett Ericson, "Folklore and Folkways in the Tarboro (N.C.) *Free Press* (1824-1850)," *Southern Folklore Quarterly*, 5 (1941), 107-25; Arthur K. Moore, "Specimens of the Folktales from Some Antebellum Newspapers of Louisiana," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, 32:4 (Oct. 1949), 723-58; Eugene Current-Garcia, "Newspaper Humor in the Old South, 1835-1855," *Alabama Review*, 2 (1949), 102-21; and George Kummer, "Specimens of Ante-Bellum Buckeye Humor," *Ohio Historical Quarterly*, 64 (1955), 424-37.
4. Ericson.
5. Dorson, p. 50.
6. Moore, p. 727.
7. Joan and Wright Langley, *Yesterday's Asheville*, Seemann's Historical Cities Series, no. 17 (Miami: E.A. Seemann Publishing, Inc., 1975), p. 15.
8. Langley, p. 19.
9. F.A. Sondley, *Asheville and Buncombe County* (Asheville: The Citizen Company, 1932), ch. 6.
10. Langley, p. 23.
11. Sondley, p. 248.
12. Langley, p. 19.
13. Langley, p. 25.
14. Most of the following information comes from the U.S. Census for Buncombe County, N.C., 1850.
15. Robert M. Topkins, comp. and ed., *Marriage and Death Notices From Extant Asheville, N.C. Newspapers 1840-70* (Raleigh, N.C.: North Carolina Geneological Society, 1977), pp. 2, 60.
16. Sondley, ch. 11, mentions that the editor of the *Messenger*, D.R. McAnally, went to Knoxville after leaving Asheville, at about the time of Atkin's marriage there.
17. Kummer, p. 431.
18. This tale is mentioned in Current-Garcia, p. 117, as being a popular one.
19. Current-Garcia, p. 118, lists other tales of the famous preacher.
20. For a black version of this tale, see Dorson, *American Negro Folktales* (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1967), p. 358.
21. *Asheville News*, February 15, 1855.
22. *Asheville News*, September 28, 1854.
23. See "Whistle Him Back Yourself," *The Carrollton Star*, January 10, 1852.
24. *Asheville News*, August 3, 1854.
25. Current-Garcia, p. 119.



W. Amos Abrams Prize 1981

Mrs. Annie Watson: A Maker of Appalachian Knotted Bedspreads

by Lark A. Shea

A Watauga County, North Carolina, craft shop is hardly complete without a supply of knotted bedspreads. These creamy white bedspreads are made by mountain women following traditional methods handed down by their mothers and grandmothers. One such artisan is Mrs. Annie Watson of Deep Gap, North Carolina.

Mrs. Watson, a small, elderly woman, lives in a white house located approximately five miles off North Carolina highway 421. She and her husband have lived in the Watauga community of Stony Fork all their lives. Her craft of knotted bedspread making is more than a hobby; it gives her much pleasure, thus relieving the isolation she sometimes experiences in her relatively remote location. She has made hundreds of knotted bedspreads, often while sitting on her front porch with a stamped spread stretched across her knees.

Mrs. Watson is extremely eager to share her craft with those who want to learn. She spent several hours with me enthusiastically explaining all aspects of knotted bedspread making. This generosity with her expertise is fortunate because with the advent of increased opportunities for women, the number of spread makers has decreased substantially.

Lark Shea, an undergraduate student at Wake Forest University, wrote her study of Mrs. Annie Watson during a summer of research with Thomas McGowan at Appalachian State University.



Figure 1. Mrs. Annie Watson stitching a bedspread in the "Snowball" design.

The spread makers believe that the craft of knotted bedspread making originated in England or Scotland several centuries ago. The ancestors of the Appalachian mountaineers brought their craft with them when they immigrated to the New World and settled along the eastern coastline. As the settlers moved to Pennsylvania and migrated down the Shenandoah Valley into the Appalachian region, they continued their traditions; among these was knotted bedspread making.

The mountainous geography of the Appalachian settlements served for the most part to isolate its inhabitants. Soon after the turn of the twentieth century, however, the increasing availability of automobiles and other transportation in the area created many fashionable vacation resorts. With the influx of affluent vacationers who appreciated the functional beauty of the spreads, the craft of knotted bedspread making became a source of supplemental income for the impoverished mountaineers.

Annette Riley Fry, whose mother marketed spreads in the first half of this century, has written that "Until 1913 the market for bedspreads and similar articles was limited to gift shops in resorts such as Blowing Rock and Asheville, but with the inauguration of the United States Parcel Post Service in 1913, everything changed."¹ No longer did the women have to rely on the seasonal visits of the wealthy; the serious makers could mail their spreads to distant customers. Attesting to this mail business are the files of letters and account books of Laura Riley, Mrs. Fry's mother, in the Fry Collection, now being catalogued by Professor Thomas McGowan at Appalachian State University.

Mrs. Annie Watson and her mother were among the numerous mountain women who parlayed their craft into a profitable activity. During the 1920's, Mrs. Watson and her mother, Mrs. Tammy Green, came into contact with Laura Riley. Annette Riley Fry explains: "My mother, Laura Riley, a Vassar professor's wife in Poughkeepsie, New York, assumed the role of middleman, advertising and promoting the sales of bedspreads in a mailorder business that reached from California to England."² Mrs. Riley did not lack for eager bedspread suppliers. Indeed, Mrs. Watson remembers, "Almost every woman in this county sold to her."³ Perhaps Mrs. Watson's statement is an exaggeration; however, it indicates that the business of knotted bedspread making was fairly extensive at that time.

For Mrs. Watson and the others like her, the income from sales to Mrs. Riley was a source of ready cash during the lean years of the Depression. Mrs. Watson recalls: "Back then I think they...sold for \$36 a pair." The one hundred percent cotton muslin which was used to make the spreads was considerably cheaper then at a price of twenty-five cents per yard. Aside from the muslin and the relatively minor expense of the cotton thread used in the knots and fringe, the sales price was mostly profit. The hand labor of the mountain women was their only marketable resource during this period.

In many aspects Annie Watson is a typical example of these mountain bedspread makers. She learned the craft from her mother and grandmother in the traditional manner; there were no formal lessons. Mrs. Watson explains: "My mother did it ever since I could remember, so she taught me how." However, Mrs. Watson had to practice knotting before her mother would trust her with a bedspread destined for sale. Mrs. Watson recalls that as a youngster she:

laid off a little old scarf or something...and learned to knot with little old scrap threads—something like that you'd just throw away. Mother wouldn't let me knot on a spread for a long time. She'd let me knot around the hems...for a long time before I got good enough to knot on a spread. And then she'd let me do what she called "outlining" and make the scrolls and kind of scatter my work around.

Mrs. Watson follows the methods for spread making that were handed down by her mother and grandmother. For Mrs. Watson, the first step in making a knotted bedspread is to choose a spread with an accurately detailed design for use as a pattern. The pattern spread need not be a completed spread that is suitable for use: often it is stained or perhaps even pieced together. This pattern spread is tacked to the floor or, more commonly, is fitted over a bed mattress. A piece of one hundred percent cotton muslin is then stretched over the finished bedspread.

A double-bed size spread requires approximately three and one quarter yards of ninety-inch wide muslin. Annette Fry suggests that in the early days of the craft, the materials used were "flour sacks bleached in the sun and cotton cord used to make the wicks of candles."⁴ In the recent past, many makers had to seam thirty-six inch wide fabric to achieve the required width.

The next step, called "laying off" or "stamping," is to rub the new muslin with a piece of cotton cloth, which has been soaked in a diluted solution of laundry bluing, over the raised areas produced by the knots on the finished bedspread. Some women prefer to use a stick of bluing which has been dampened with water. Either method produces a design of blue dots on the new sheet of muslin.

The knotting of the newly stamped sheet of muslin usually begins soon afterwards. Mrs. Gaye Golds (one of the women whom Mrs. Watson has taught the craft) explains: "I'll tell you, one of the things about knotting your bedspread is once you lay it off, you need to start it immediately, because the longer that bluing stays in your spread, the harder it is to get out. So once you lay off a bedspread, you best start working on it and get it finished, or else you'll be boiling that thing half a dozen times to get that bluing out."⁵

The knotting stitch, known as the "colonial knot" by many bedspread makers, is a version of the embroiderer's French knot. In most cases a large darning needle is used to make the stitch. The thread most commonly used is single-ply unbleached cotton, for example the Belding Lily Company's "hand weaving" yarn. Several strands of thread are twisted together, the number of strands depending on the preference of the maker, with an average of four to seven. Mrs. Watson accomplished this task with a yarn rack which was fashioned by her late father. After the needle has been threaded, the twisted threads are pulled through a cake of beeswax. This process both strengthens the twisted strand and "glues" the individual threads together.

As demonstrated by Mrs. Watson, the colonial knot is executed by pushing the needle through the printed side of the muslin, and pulling the thread until only a small piece of yarn remains exposed. This step differs from the French knot in which the stitch is secured by knotting

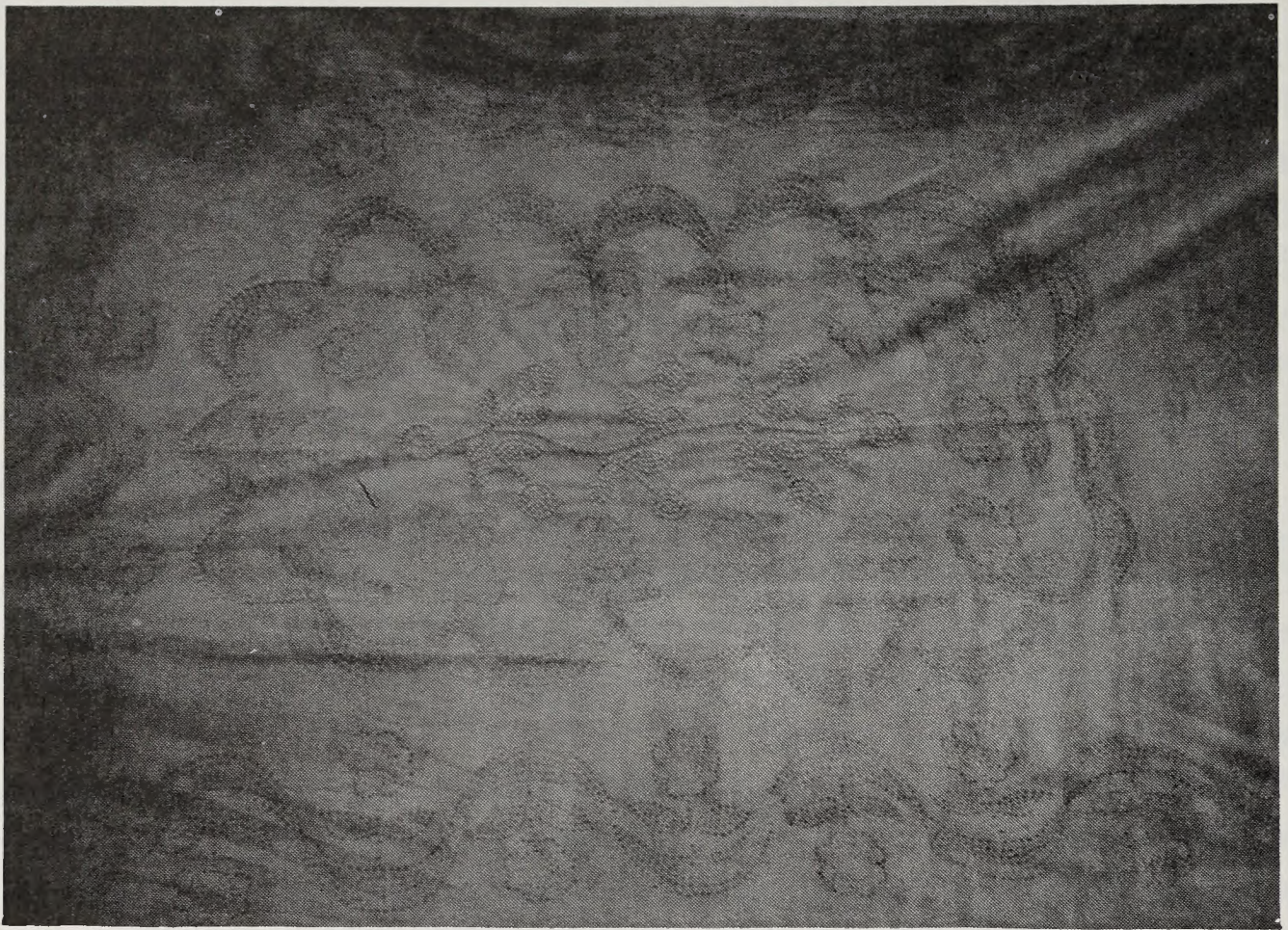


Figure 2. A stamped bedspread in the "Sunflower" pattern. The pattern of blue dots is produced by the stamping process.

the threads together to anchor the stitch on the underside of the cloth. However, one of the characteristics of well-made knotted bedspreads, according to Mrs. Watson, is that there are no knots on the underside of the fabric. Later, a stitch will cover the exposed length of thread.

Next, the needle is pulled toward the right-handed maker and held taut with the left hand. The right hand slips the needle beneath the thread and, with a deft movement, twists the needle once around the thread. This is another departure from the French knot in which the thread is wrapped around the needle.

Finally, the needle is inserted into the fabric approximately one quarter inch from the previously completed stitch. The threads are pulled through the fabric, forming a small knot. This stitch is repeated to form the design of the spread.

Mrs. Watson, like most other knotters, makes several bedspread designs. Among the more commonly used designs are "Bird in Tree," "Bowknot and Thistle," "Snowball" or "Napoleon Wreath," "Sunflower," and "Grapevine." Each pattern name is suggestive of the design produced. It is believed by most makers, or "knotters" as they sometimes refer to themselves, that the "Bowknot and Thistle" and "Bird in Tree" patterns are the oldest designs. Each maker appears to have a specialty; for instance, Mrs. Watson favors the "Sunflower" design over the other patterns.

After the knotting of the design is completed, the edges of the spread, with the exception of the pillow end, are finished by attaching hand-tied cotton fringe. Again, there are many patterns of fringe made by the mountain women. Among the most popular patterns are "Cross Stitch," "Crowsfoot," and "Turkey Run." Mrs. Watson demonstrated the tying of her favorite fringe, the "Cross Stitch," by forming alternate rows of knots and twisted threads to produce a four-inch-wide piece of trim.

The fringe is made with unbleached cotton string, unlike the knotting thread. This string is threaded into a shuttle or needle. The shuttle is then passed through stitches which have been begun on a wooden dowel or broom handle fitted over two chair backs. The pattern of the fringe is formed with the aid of wooden dowel spacers of varying widths. Row upon row of fringe is formed until the desired width is attained. The fringe is made in one continuous piece, approximately nine to nine and a half yards in length for a double bed size spread.

It is in her fringe tying that Annie Watson's professional attitude toward the production of knotted bedspreads is most evident. She rejects the crude "broom handle over two chair backs" method, preferring instead to use the fringe rack fashioned by her late father. The rack is a marvel of compactness and ingenuity typical of the self-sufficient spirit of the mountaineers. The wooden frame not only features a dowel for attaching fringe, but also has a handy trough which stores extra thread, shuttles, wooden spacers, and scissors for easy access. A foot board was placed across the bottom of the frame to allow the fringe maker to steady the frame with her feet.

Instead of the wooden shuttles used by many makers, Mrs. Watson ties her fringe with a needle, also fashioned several years ago by her father from a large flattened nail. In the past, Annie and her mother often used broken umbrella ribs as substitute needles. Mrs. Watson explains: "You could cut them off and make them the length that you wanted them." It is interesting that Annie and several makers cling to their traditional home-made tools when there are modern plastic equivalents readily available. Perhaps this is a minor way in which the makers feel they can preserve the traditional methods in the face of technology.

After attaching the fringe to the spread, one of the more laborious tasks of knotted bedspread making must be performed, washing the spread to remove the laundry bluing. First, the completed bedspread is soaked overnight in cold water. Next, Mrs. Watson advises: "I usually put mine in a pan and put it on the stove and boil it to get the bluing out. Now some people say they can get it out through the machine, but...I usually have to boil mine to get the bluing out. If you don't get it out the first time you wash it, you won't ever get it out."

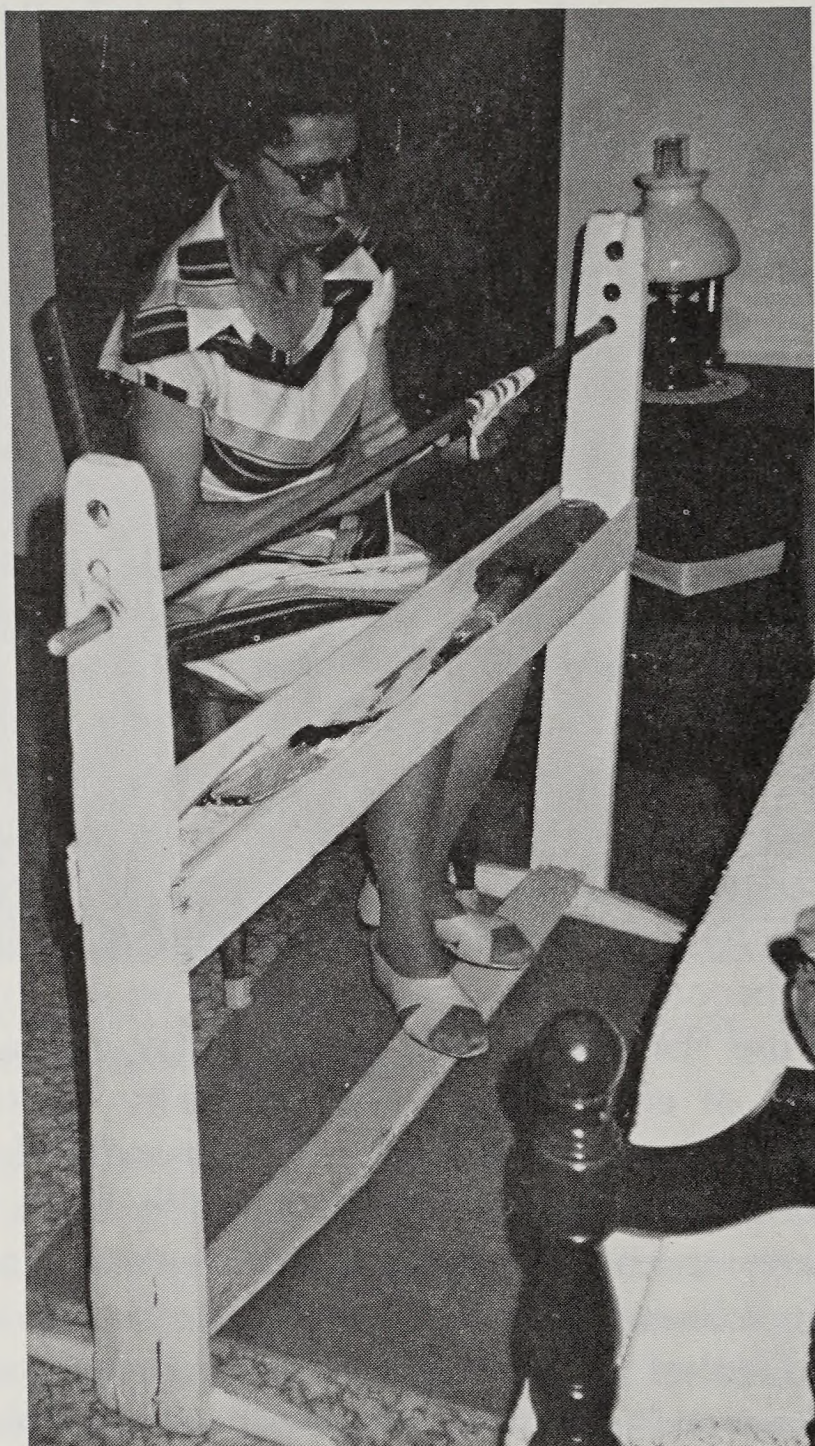


Figure 3. Mrs. Watson ties fringe with the rack made by her father. The slat of wood at the bottom is used to steady the rack.

As a final step, the bed spread is line-dried, then ironed on the wrong side. The finished spread is then ready to be dispatched to the customer.

It is interesting that most bedspreads are indeed “dispatched to the customer.” It seems that few makers actually use their own spreads. For example, Mrs. Watson chose factory produced chenille and quilted spreads for her beds. When asked about this, she replied: “We just made them to sell because we couldn’t afford to use them.” On rare occasions, however, she has given spreads to dear friends or family members. Such a gift not only represents countless hours of labor, but also is worth \$200 to \$300 in the marketplace.

Although a well-made bedspread could bring the knoter such a healthy sum, the number of knotted bedspread makers has declined markedly in recent years. In Mrs. Watson's words: "They've got other work to do. I mean jobs that they can make so much more at now. They used to not have anything else to do, I guess." Mrs. Watson herself does not make nearly as many knotted bedspreads as she once did. Recently she developed arthritis in her hands which often limits her needlework activity. A problem more common to other makers is the lack of availability of good quality muslin. For some reason the supply is not nearly as large as it once was. Mrs. Watson estimates: "It's not been that we could get it for...four or five years."

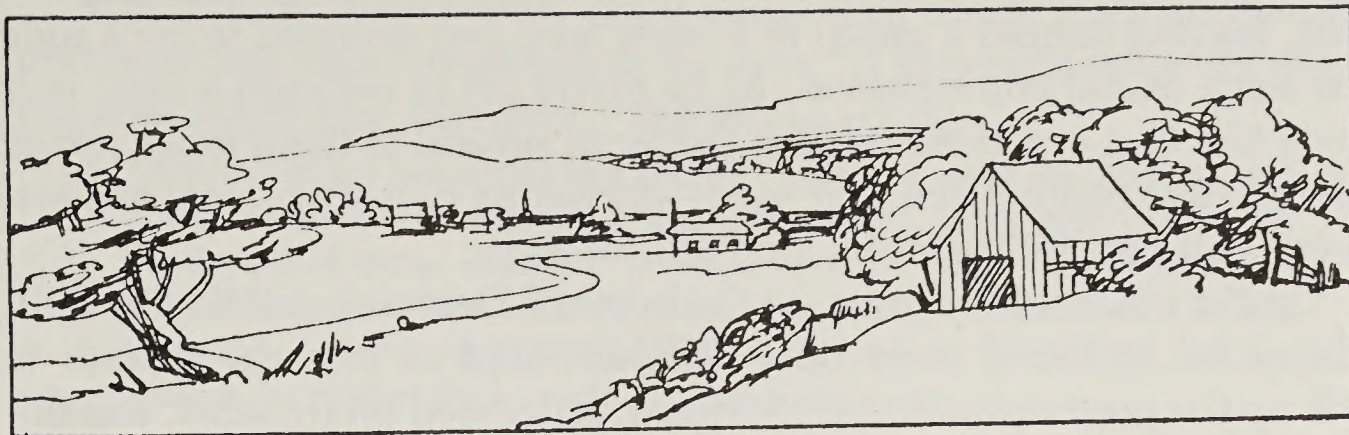
Despite these stumbling blocks, Mrs. Watson is doing her best to keep knotted bedspread making alive. Because the transmission from mother to daughter or through neighbors is no longer sufficient to sustain a large number of active makers, Mrs. Watson has employed another Appalachian social institution, the Baptist church. Through this vehicle, she has taught many women the intricacies of the centuries-old craft. One of Mrs. Watson's many students, Mrs. Gaye Golds, is a relative by marriage; however, the church connection fostered the opportunity for instruction.

Erik Erikson, the contemporary social psychologist, has proposed a theory of socialization which suggests a process through which individuals must pass. Boyd R. McCandless explains: "Each stage is regarded by Erikson as a 'psychosocial crisis,' which arises and demands resolution before the next stage can be satisfactorily negotiated."⁶ For Erikson, the seventh stage is to acquire a sense of generativity and to avoid a sense of self-absorption. He suggests that personal and creative life and the community of the adult must merge in order to prevent the isolation produced by self-absorption. As Henry Maier explains: "Each adult accepts or rejects the challenge of accepting the next generation as his responsibility and of assuring this new generation the trust outlined in the first Eriksonian developmental stage."⁷

In view of Erikson's theory, Mrs. Watson does more than produce an expensive Appalachian souvenir for the affluent. Through her interactions with others while teaching knotted bedspread making, she helps to insure the continuance of the craft. Through her generous nature, the spirit of Annie Watson will survive as a result of the perpetuation of her craft by her students.

NOTES

1. Annette R. Fry, "Bedspreads in the Mountain Manner," *Americana*, May/June 1978, p. 30.
2. Fry, p. 30.
3. Interview with Mrs. Annie Watson in Stony Fork, N.C., on July 23, 1981. This interview is recorded on two cassette tapes and transcribed. The tapes and transcriptions are in the research files of Dr. Thomas McGowan at Appalachian State University. All quotations from Mrs. Watson are from this interview with the author.
4. Fry, p. 30.
5. Interview with Mrs. Gaye Golds at Appalachian State University on July 15, 1981. This interview is recorded on cassette tape and transcribed. The tape and transcription are in the research files of Dr. Thomas McGowan at Appalachian State University.
6. Boyd R. McCandless, *Children: Behavior and Development* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), p. 418.
7. Henry Maier, *Three Theories of Child Development* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 67.



Traditional Medical Information Systems in Deep Run, North Carolina

by James W. Kirkland

About ten miles southwest of Kinston, North Carolina, along a narrow stretch of highway that winds through the sparsely populated farmlands of the coastal plains region, lies the small crossroads community of Deep Run. Just off the highway, behind a long row of evenly spaced homes and stores, stands the B & S Cafe, where on a given afternoon, as many as half a dozen people move about in the cramped, heat-saturated kitchen at the back of the restaurant, seemingly oblivious to work hazards until someone brushes against the massive cast-iron stove that juts out into the room or is spattered with hot grease while lifting a pan from the burner. Without hesitation, the victim summons a co-worker, Kathleen Johnson, who proceeds to "talk the fire out of the burn," a ritual she has performed so often that the others in the room scarcely take notice of it.

About a mile to the south, a truck pulls up in front of Odell Hill's Farm Supply Store. Leaping from the cab, the driver hurries into the store and calls out to the counter clerk, "Walter, can you come with me? My mother's just burned her hand." Quickly arranging for someone to take his place behind the cash register, Walter heads out the

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door, leaving behind a group of friends who had dropped in for a soda and some casual conversation. As he drives off to perform a cure very much like that practiced by Mrs. Johnson, several of them make joking references to conjuration, but most—including two other local healers, Avery Ball and Billy Smith—nod approvingly.

On the other side of town, at the home of Dempsey and Shelby Hill, other local residents come on a different kind of medical errand: to pick up the prescriptions that Dempsey, a licensed pharmacist, has filled at his Kinston clinic and brought home with him after work for the convenience of his neighbors. Among the Hills' most frequent visitors are Shelby's mother, Mrs. Lena Grady, and her friends, who often sit in the family room, talking about current medical problems and, from time to time, interjecting stories about the value of the old ways of healing, when, according to Mrs. Grady, "There weren't no doctors, and you couldn't afford one nohow."

Scenes like these are commonplace in this uncommonly interesting community, where centuries-old traditions co-exist with modern scientific medical practices and the magic of wart-doctoring and burn-healing is as familiar a subject of conversation as the evening weather forecast or the latest price quotations from the tobacco market. I first became acquainted with the town and its traditions almost two years ago while doing a regional survey of folk medical practitioners, and since that time, I have had the opportunity to return on numerous occasions to conduct interviews with more than forty informants in settings like those noted earlier and to collect several hundred items of medical lore, ranging from one sentence statements of belief to elaborate case histories and testimonials.

At one time, virtually all the major forms of naturopathic and magico-religious healing¹ were known and practiced throughout the Deep Run area, often in lieu of orthodox medical care. People relied on their own ingenuity and on individuals like Mrs. Grady, who up until about twenty years ago treated a variety of illnesses for her family and others with medications prepared from the herbs, roots, and other substances that grew in abundance on their farm. "One thing we used to use was poppy seeds," she remarked during one of several informal conversations at her daughter's home. "We'd go out to the barn, take them, and boil them, and give them to a woman who was pregnant. If it was true labor, that would bring it on." She also remembered making several different kinds of medications from weeds and mosses. "There was some kind of weed called tansi—it was given to people for pain, like babies, you know, when they were crying." Also, "You could go to your collard patch, get you some vinegar on, so it wouldn't be so sticky, and then put it to your feet and hands—it would make a fever go away. Cotton leaves would do the same. I've used both."

Mrs. Grady speaks with equal conviction about some of the other practices that once flourished in the area. "There used to be lots of people who could stop bleeding," she informed me.

They would say something you couldn't hear and move the Bible up and down over the cut or whatever it was....My cousin Darlee knew how to talk the fire out of burns, and—oh, yes, here's another thing—there was a man who came out to where we lived when I was young and asked me if I'd like to get rid of all the warts on my hands, and I said yes. So he did it and sure enough, he rubbed those warts and they went away.

Listening in on this conversation was Shelby, who provided the impetus for a whole new round of anecdotes by asking, "Wasn't there some man, mamma, who used to come around when people got sick?"

Yes, that's right. His name was Dr. Hootypeck, and he would come and talk to the sick person and then go out behind the house and mumble something else while he tapped on the house. I just remembered something else, too. Verna Jenkins, a friend of mine, has a madstone. I don't think she's used it much, but her mammy and granddaddy used it a lot. They say you can put it on a snakebite and it will draw the poison right out.

As these accounts and others like them suggest, folk medicine remains vital and meaningful even for passive tradition bearers like Mrs. Grady, whose stories about the old ways and beliefs serve to reinforce the bonds that link her with those in the community who share her outlook and experiences and to educate the uninitiated that "what we used to use was as good as what doctors are doing today" and "there's things doctors do now that makes you worse than you were." For others in the community, folk medicine serves a more explicit function, offering a practical alternative to orthodox physician care. While none of my informants are aware of the existence of any modern-day naturopathic healers, bloodstoppers, or conjurers, Verna Jenkins' madstone is still available to anyone who wants to use it, and magico-religious healers who rub off warts or talk the fire out of burns practice their specialties on a wide scale.

Although Thomas Forbes of the Yale University Medical School concluded in a 1976 article that "one searches in vain for contemporary mention of the madstone,"² the stone in Mrs. Jenkins' possession bears an unmistakable resemblance to the substances Forbes describes. "It's supposedly very rare when you find one of these," she explained. "It comes from the maw of a white deer. If something bites you or stings you, you put it on and it'll stick right there. I have actually swung my hand and couldn't get it off." Mrs. Jenkins still uses the stone for the self-treatment of insect stings, although her commitment to maintaining the family healing tradition has diminished to the point that Forbes' conclusions about the demise of the practice may ultimately prove correct in this case. But there seems to be little likelihood of a similar decline in the wart doctoring or burn healing traditions.

The most recent in a long line of community wart doctors are Avery Ball and Billy Smith, who "carry off" warts by rubbing them while reciting a verse or prayer that is incomprehensible to the person being treated. According to Mr. Smith, "I just rub it, and it either goes or stays. I say a little something, too, but not so that anybody can hear it. Well, there's somebody upstairs; he probably hears it." Mr. Ball describes his own procedures in the same ambiguous terms: "Now with me, I just rub the warts. I don't say nothing. Course, I more or less say a prayer, but it's not the same thing every time."³

As these brief descriptions suggest, there is also a strong religious dimension to the cure. Mr. Smith in particular stresses a concept that is common to almost all magico-religious healers: the belief that the practitioner is a conduit for the flow of divine healing energy rather than the source of that power. "I ain't saying I can carry off warts, now," Mr. Smith informed me. "I don't claim to be able to do nothing, see? It's just like I say, if you have faith enough, you can move a mountain—but, of course, a mountain's a pretty good sized thing." The two men also share the conviction that a strong commitment of personal faith is essential to the curative process. In the words of Billy Smith, "Well, it's just a matter of believing it. If the person doesn't believe, you can't do much," a sentiment echoed by Avery Ball, who requires an overt declaration of faith: "If somebody wants me to carry away a wart, I'll say, 'Do you believe I can carry it away? Well, if you do, I reckon I can then.' You see, it's more or less faith. It's faith in the person—your faith in me and my faith in you."

Not content merely to theorize about the treatment, both healers relate case histories intended to confirm their successes and, in many instances, to demonstrate their concern for others. Mr. Smith, for example, tells the story of a woman who came out to his house one time: "She had a wart about that long, right black. I rubbed it and in a day or two it fell off." Similarly, Mr. Ball relates how he went to Goldsboro one day and "came back and stopped at the cafe. There was a girl standing there, and her hands were covered with warts. And I said, 'Do you want them damn things?' And she said 'No, I don't.' So I said, 'Let me see them.' In about a month, I went back and her hands were just as smooth."⁴ Implicit in these narratives are several other typical characteristics of the tradition: the willingness of wart doctors to perform the cure for people of different ages under varying circumstances, sometimes initiating contact with prospective patients and on other occasions responding to the requests of people who seek them out. The omission of any reference to financial reimbursement is also significant, for neither practitioner charges for this service.

Of the two, Billy Smith is the better known, perhaps because people often associate him with his more famous predecessor Kerney Smith,

whose accomplishments are still repeated in local stories. But both current practitioners say that they perform the cure fairly regularly for their neighbors and the people they regularly associate with at Odell Hill's store. And the trend seems likely to continue since they offer a convenient, painless cure for what is usually a non-threatening problem and their talents are known to almost everyone who frequents the store.

An even stronger tradition is the ritual of talking out fire, an ancient magico-religious cure that dates back at least as far as the Middle Ages and has been practiced in Deep Run for as long as anyone can remember.⁵ Mrs. Grady's cousin Darlee was performing the cure when she was a child, and, according to Verna Jenkins, there was also a woman out on the highway that "just about everybody knew about." Other present-day residents speak of people like Bessie Riggs and Thomas Dunn, who not only practiced the tradition but helped to perpetuate it by passing along the secret to Walter King and Kathleen Johnson, who are among the most active of the numerous burn-healers now practicing in this area.

Although their treatment procedures differ somewhat, both Mrs. Johnson and Mr. King have the same objective: to extract fire from the wound in order to alleviate pain, promote healing, and prevent scarring. Mrs. Johnson's approach is to "put your hand where the burn is; hold it still if the burn is small. If not, rub it and say the verse three times, but not so anyone can hear you. It burns real bad when it's coming out, but it stops hurting, and most times it doesn't leave a scar. I know. I've done it for myself." Mr. King also murmurs a secret incantation but blows on the burn rather than rubbing it to draw out the fire:

You put your lips close to it, and you work it around, work it around, till you get back to where you started. Now I can see the water run out just like sweat. You have been in your life where you could see a kettle on a stove. Well, that's the way that steam comes out of that burned place. That's why it makes your lips so dry. Now, it will hurt some, but if I can get all of it, it won't. And I'll tell you something else. The quicker they get to me, the quicker I can get it out, and it won't blister, neither. It works. I have faith in it. It's a gift.

Mr. King and Mrs. Johnson and others like them willingly use their "gift" for the benefit of those in need of help, not for any financial reward—because they will accept none—but as an expression of religious faith and human compassion. Those qualities are especially evident in Mr. King's story of an incident that occurred several years ago:

A colored woman came to me one time. She acted like she was real scared. I said to her, "Now, lady, I'm not going to hurt you. But I want to ask you, do you believe in the Bible? What I'm going to do is pure Bible." When I got through, I asked her if it hurt, and she said, "No." I saw her husband the next day at the store, and asked him if it had blistered, and he said, "No."

Apparently a great many people in Deep Run share the burn healers' faith or, at the very least, are willing to suspend disbelief in the hope of a quick release from pain and the fear of disfigurement. According to the practitioners, they have performed the cure at least 300 to 400 times apiece during the past twenty years. Although the scope of their practices is much greater than that of their wart-doctoring counterparts, the means by which people in the community learn about their accomplishments are essentially the same. Except in cases where the treatment has been offered unsolicited, prospective patients are usually drawn to such healers for one of several reasons: they have witnessed a successful administration of the cure, they have heard about it through orally-circulating case histories such as the narratives cited throughout this study, or they have been referred or brought to the healer by some knowledgeable intermediary. In a larger, more heterogeneous community, conditions might not be so conducive to the formation of such an extensive medical information and referral network, but Deep Run has a population of only a hundred and fifty, and many of its current residents have lived and worked in such proximity to the one another for such a long period of time that no one would question Shelby Hill's observation that "Deep Run is a close-knit type of place where everybody knows everybody else" and "news travels fast."

News of Kathleen Johnson's ability to talk out fire has been circulating almost as long as she has known how to perform the cure. Having experienced the treatment at first-hand, her six stepsons carried this knowledge with them as they grew up, passing it along to their friends and later to their wives and children, who in turn transmitted the information to their own children. As Mrs. Johnson explains,

When they get burned, they all come to me. Bobby Jr. had a girlfriend. She poured hot coffee on her one morning and he called me up. He hadn't called me in years. He called me up and asked if I could do him a favor. Said, would I talk the fire out for his girlfriend if he brought her over here. I felt like telling him I'd rather talk to a tree, but I did it. Doesn't matter whether you like them or not.

Actually, Mrs. Johnson likes most of the people she has treated, especially her co-workers at the cafe, for whom she performs the cure on an almost weekly basis. They were first drawn to her by the stories they had heard from people close at hand, and since that time, they too have become part of the process by which news of her abilities is disseminated to other potential patients. Julie Stroud, for example, first heard of the practice from "Some of them around here, who told me she could do it," and now relates testimonials of her own: "The first time I got burned here, Kathleen talked the fire out, and ever since then she has done it whenever I've gotten burned. As soon as she does it, it burns real bad, just a second or two. Then it goes away and it

don't burn that way no more—or leave a scar either.” Another employee at the cafe, Floyd Ham, relates a similar story: “I stumbled with a pot of hot beans. Fell down with it. I hit it right up here on my forehead. It did just fine where Kathleen talked the fire out. I felt better right away. And you can't much see it anymore.”

Mr. Ham has also consulted Walter King for similar injuries, typically on occasions when he was closer to Odell Hill's Farm Supply Store or when Mrs. Johnson was working a different shift. “Walter talked it out of my foot one time,” he went on to say. “I spilled a tub of hot water on my shoe and it ran down inside before I could get it off. I went on down to the store and he came out to the car and did it there. That one didn't leave any scars either.” Other testimonials for Walter King come from many different sources: from his employer Odell Hill, whom Walter treated for chemical burns two or three years ago; Odell's wife Cleo, who has gone to him on many occasions for grease burns; the Hills' youngest son Dexter, who is convinced the cure works because Walter talked the fire out of his arm when, as a child, he had brushed up against a hot tractor muffler; Thomas Heath, who insists that “There ain't no doubt about Walter being able to talk out fire because he did it for me here at the store when I burned my hand with hot grease”; and, to cite but one additional example, Thomas' wife Emma, who called Walter when her sixteen-year-old daughter stumbled while carrying a pot of boiling water out the door and burned her arm and shoulder. “I can't explain what he did,” she told me. “But he did his procedure with it and she stopped crying. It's amazing. But you see, I come from a family where my father does the same thing.”

Sometimes, the circumstances that bring healer and patient together are more complex, as in the case of Hugh Benton, a truck driver in his early thirties who was severely burned several years ago when the pop-off valve of a liquid propane tank ruptured just as he walked in front of it. Hugh had met Walter King but was unaware of the latter's gift for healing burns. When he was taken to the hospital and told that he would have to remain there for at least four or five days, he simply accepted the doctor's word and reconciled himself to a long and painful convalescence. Without his knowledge, however, other processes had been set in motion the moment the hospital notified his wife Debbie of the accident. She in turn called her aunt, Cleo Hill, who relayed the information to her husband. Within a short time, Odell had called Walter to tell him what had happened, driven to Walter's trailer to pick him up, taken him to the hospital, and convinced the nurse on duty to allow Walter as much time as he needed to help Hugh. Accounts of what happened next differ somewhat, depending on whether the narrator is the healer, the patient, or the intermediary. But they agree in their essential details, almost all of which I have

heard related by people at the store and elsewhere who were not present when these events occurred. As might be expected, Walter's version of the story is the most detailed:

We got there, and Odell told the nurse that this man had come to talk the fire out. He said, "Now what do you think about it." "Well," she said, "my grandmother used to do that, and if that's his desire, and he believes it, if he's got faith in it, it's perfectly all right." So we went on into the room. When she left, I said to Hugh, "Now it's going to take about an hour; you'll have to bear with me because it's gonna hurt." So I started on him. It took about an hour. I said, "Now, Hugh, is it burning?" He said, "Yes." I asked him, when I got through, "Is it still burning?" But I could already tell that it was faded away. He said, "No. It's quit burning." If I hadn't gotten it all, I would have gone back over it again. I had to stop several times and dry my lips. They'll crack open sometimes. He called me the next day and said, "Walter, the doctor said I could go home. He said, 'Boy, what's happened to you over night?' "

Because Odell did not stay in the room while Walter performed the healing ritual, his version of the story concentrates on the events leading up to that time. But Hugh Benton's personal narrative provides an illuminating accompaniment to the healer's account:

What I remember is that I was lying in the hospital, and Walter came in and said that he was going to talk out the fire. I could feel it coming out. I could feel the pain leaving. And the doctor came back in there later, and he was amazed at how the injury had cured up in such a short period of time. Said he hadn't ever seen anything like it before. Said it should've been scarred there, with blisters and all, but it never did happen that way. It worked for me. He said you've got to believe in it. I do now, that's for sure.

So dramatic are the details of these variant versions of the same incident, and so forcefully do they illustrate the efficacy of the cure, that the story had spread not only throughout the community but beyond its boundaries as well.

As long as Odell Hill's Farm Supply Store and places like the B & S Cafe remain in existence and practitioners like Walter King, Kathleen Johnson, Avery Ball, and Billy Smith continue to perform their healing magic, folk medicine will survive in an active form. Even some of the old beliefs, seemingly vanquished by the advancements of modern medicine, have a way of surfacing in unexpected contexts, as this story by Shelby Hill indicates:

Momma had checked the signs one day when Meaghan, our oldest daughter, had a dentist's appointment, and said she shouldn't have her teeth filled. She called Dempsey and told him to call the dentist and cancel the appointment. Dempsey said something about witch doctors. Then Dr. Brody Smith walked in and said, "Dempsey, you know there's something to that." He said, "I can't explain it, but there's something to it."

Here, in microcosm, is the essence of folk medicine as a dynamic process of human interactions, captured with remarkable clarity and insight in this family anecdote about a former naturopathic practitioner,

a patient of wart doctors and burn healers, who continues to shape family medical decisions, influence the behavior of medical professionals, and even trigger a sympathetic response from a practicing physician, whose words echo what people in Deep Run and elsewhere have been saying about folk medicine all along: "I can't explain it, but there is something to it."

NOTES

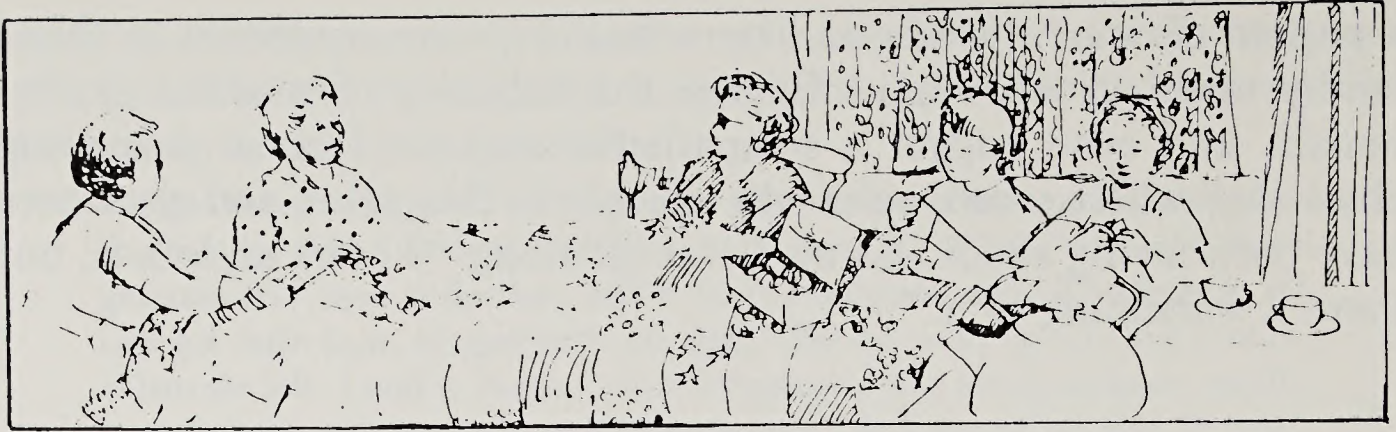
1. These two terms will be used throughout this study to designate what Don Yoder defines as the main branches of folk medicine: natural or naturopathic medicine, which "involves the seeking of cures for...ills in the herbs, plants, minerals, and animal substances of nature" and "the magico-religious variety, sometimes called 'occult' folk medicine, which attempts to use charms, holy words, and holy actions to cure disease." "Folk Medicine," *Folklore and Folklife*, ed. Richard Dorson (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1972), p. 192.

2. Thomas Forbes, "The Madstone," *American Folk Medicine: A Symposium*, ed. Wayland D. Hand (Berkeley: U. of California P., 1976), p. 18. For an extensive survey of madstones in our state, see Joseph Clark's monograph, *Madstones in North Carolina*, *NCFJ*, 24:1, with supplementary listings in 25:1, 33-35, and 29:2, 106-07.

3. Similar treatment procedures are described in many of the items listed in *Popular Beliefs and Superstitions from North Carolina*, Vol. VI of *The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1961), pp. 349-50, as well as in Vance Randolph's *Ozark Superstitions* (New York: Columbia U. P., 1947), p. 126, and in numerous other sources.

4. In form and function, these case histories are akin to those recounted by Michael Owen Jones in "Doing What with Which, and to Whom? The Relationship of Case History Accounts to Healing" in *American Folk Medicine: A Symposium*, pp. 301-14. Jones' article is one of the few studies that examines the influence of medical narratives on patient/practitioner relationships.

5. The most thorough treatment of the rituals associated with this tradition is Thomas Forbes' "Verbal Charms in British Folk Medicine," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 115:4 (August 1971), 293-316. Other useful sources include the *Brown Collection*, *Ozark Superstitions*, Richard Dorson's *Bloodstoppers and Bearwalkers* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1952), and various articles, most of which are concerned with the nature and effect of the cure, rather than with the contexts that underlie and influence it.



Folklore Sampler

A Further Note on Herb Doctor Cicero West

by E.T. Malone, Jr.

Carol Shaw's article "Memories of a Folk Doctor: Dr. Cicero West," published in the May 1980 number of *North Carolina Folklore Journal*, dealt very well with the career of the late "root doctor," emphasizing his medicinal cures. According to some Harnett County residents interviewed in the early 1970's, however, Cicero West also had psychic powers and could see the future or locate lost items.

During 1973, when I was editor of the *Harnett County News* in Lillington, a county resident approached me and suggested that I write a feature story about West. It seemed to be a good idea, so as I made my rounds in northern and western Harnett I began to ask older people about this "root doctor." Amazingly, every individual who had knowledge of West appeared to believe that his cures were genuine. Nobody with whom I talked thought that he was a fake.

One man in Chalybeate Springs spoke of long black Cadillacs that drove down from Raleigh or Durham into upper Harnett County looking for "Doctor" West. "They say he'd keep the bark stripped off every tree in the branch down there makin' teas and poultices," said one man from Kipling.

Although a number of persons remarked on West's reputed psychic powers, only one individual, Mrs. Jake Fish of Angier, was willing to make specific comment. "He was a hermit," adjudged Mrs. Fish. "He

stayed out there at his place and wouldn't ever come into town." She related to me two instances in which West had located lost animals for members of her family.

"My Daddy's mule ran away and he looked and looked, but couldn't find it, so he went out to Cicero to see if he could tell him where it had got to. Well, Cicero, he told my Daddy, 'Your mule has gone east into Johnston County. You'll get 'im back, but it'll cost ye.' " Mrs. Fish said her father set out looking for the mule. He went on into Johnston County, about twenty-five miles distance from his farm in lower Wake County, and finally found the mule. A farmer had caught it and was keeping it in his barn. Her father got the mule back, but had to pay the farmer for three weeks' board.

Then her husband lost a prized hunting dog. He was sorely grieved, but the neighbors convinced him also to go and visit old Cicero. The story was the same. "Your dog too has gone to Johnston County," said Cicero. "Sure enough, it had. Jake, my husband, went riding east over there, and before long he came to a bale of cotton, and there was the old dog a-sittin' up on top of it," she declared.

Regarding medicinal cures, the story was told me that the late David Henry Senter, a prominent citizen of Lillington who edited *The Harnett Post*, a weekly, during World War I and was later president of the Bank of Lillington, once called on West for aid. One of Senter's children had what in those days was called the "thrash" in his throat, and nothing the regular doctors could do would help. Cicero told Senter to grease the child's throat with salted butter and the thrash would go away. The order was followed and, sure enough, the child got well, my informant assured me.

In addition to the obituary from the *Raleigh News and Observer* which was quoted in Miss Shaw's article, there was also an extensive front page news story about West's death in the November 12, 1942, issue of the *Harnett County News*. West, who died November 7, 1942, was buried in the cemetery at Prospect Free Will Baptist Church southwest of Coats in eastern Harnett County.

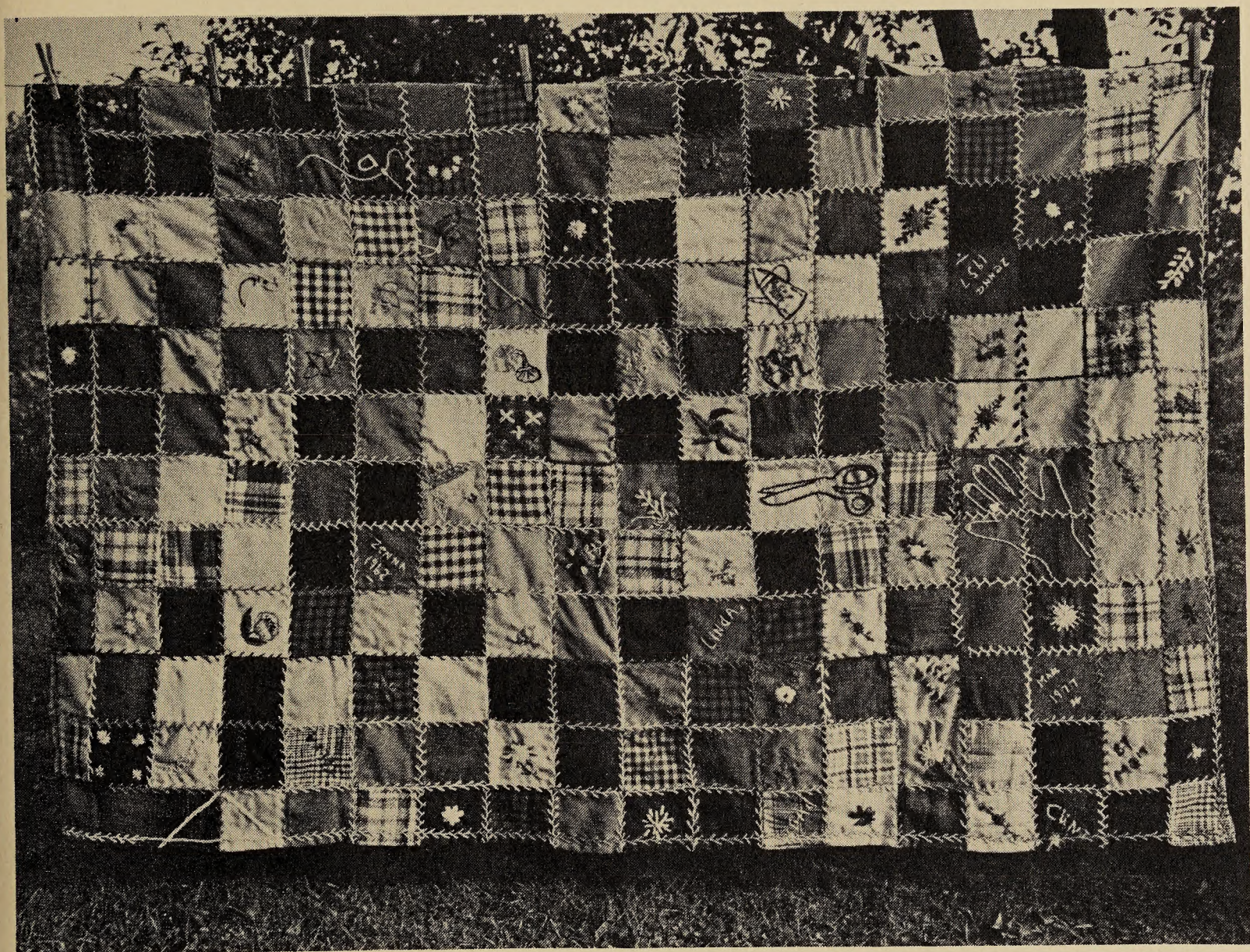
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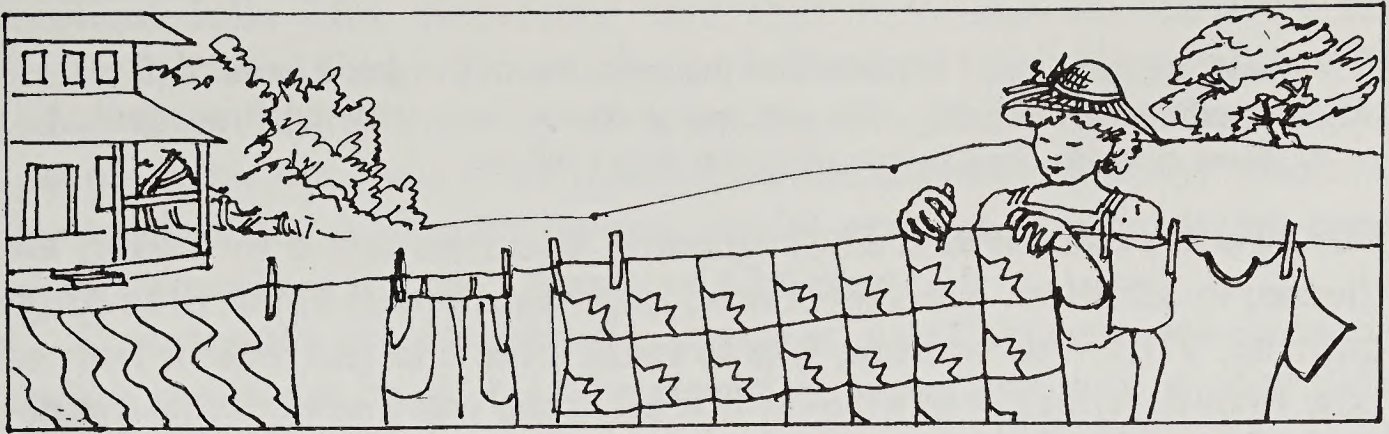
Fall-Winter 1982

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Cover: Crazy quilt by Zenna Todd of Ennice, North Carolina. Photograph
by Geraldine Johnson, American Folklife Center BR-45-20544.



“More for Warmth Than for Looks”: Quilts of the Blue Ridge Mountains

by Geraldine N. Johnson

I. Introduction. Toward the end of my stay in the Blue Ridge as a part of the American Folklife Center’s research team, I interviewed Zenna Todd, a traditional quilter from Ennis, North Carolina. During the course of our conversation, she told me the following narrative and later alluded to parts of it several times, an indication of its importance in her repertoire of narratives:

I’ll never forget the first quilt that I cut out by pattern; it was a Monkey Wrench. My mother-in-law, she was going to show me how to quilt, you know, and how to do it. So she helped me to get started. The lining was kind of a deep rose color, and I said to her, I said, what kind of thread should we use to quilt this with. Oh, I was really tickled to get started, you know, on that quilt, and she says, well, I’d just use black. Said you’ve got an awful lot of dark colors in it. So we hanged the quilt from the ceiling with cord, and put it in a frame, and she helped me to get started. She didn’t tell me to pull the knots through the lining and have them on the inside so they wouldn’t show. She says, well now, you just go ahead and quilt all the way across there, and I’ll be back tomorrow and see how you’re doing. So I quilted all the way across one side. She didn’t tell me about the knots, and where I’d tied those knots and I hadn’t pulled them through, and there they showed, just them black knots on the underneath side. So when I rolled the quilt up, I rolled it up so we could walk under it and around it, and I looked up under it, and it looked like flies a-setting on the quilt. I said when she come back, I

Geraldine Johnson prepared this essay as a fieldworker for the Blue Ridge Project of the American Folklife Center. An earlier version, “‘Plain and Fancy’: The Socioeconomics of Blue Ridge Quilts,” appeared in Appalachian Journal, 10:1, 12-35.

said, my goodness, I've just ruined this quilt. I said, I've got, it looks like flies a-setting on the lining. She says, my goodness, says, why didn't you pull them through. And I says, why, you didn't tell me.

Mrs. Todd's narrative is both amusing and instructive to a local audience; in addition, it makes several important points about Blue Ridge quilting. First, this woman, like so many others in the region, learned how to quilt from her mother-in-law after she was married. She did not set up house keeping with the proverbial dozen quilts or an elaborately stitched bridal quilt.¹ Second, the quilting process itself was, and still is, a solitary affair performed in the home with quilting frames suspended from the ceiling. Quilting bees are relatively modern devices used primarily for fund-raising by local groups. Finally the quilts were pieced in traditional block patterns and quilted with thread of a contrasting color. Elaborate patterns radiating from the center are uncommon, and thread colors were seldom chosen to blend in with the color of the quilt top or lining.

These observations contradict some common notions about quilting, and at the same time reinforce the importance of continuing serious investigations into regional quilting styles. Although many scholars believe that this particular area of women's studies has been examined in microscopic detail, we have done very little to examine the entire range of quilts created in any given region. We have poked at quilt tops until they are ragged, documented quilting bees ad infinitum, and more recently, investigated ethnic sources of quilting styles.² One reason for this narrowed vision seems to be our scholarly preoccupation with the Pennsylvania-German quilting model; individual quilters or communities of quilters that do not fit the stereotype are routinely ignored. We need to begin to examine the entire scope of a woman's handwork and produce more descriptive essays dealing with regional quilt types and quilting techniques. Finally we also should document the quilter's words and narratives to better understand the history, vision, and spirit of women who create such intriguing items.³

Peering more closely at specific regions gives us an opportunity to examine the impact of specific socioeconomic forces. The quilting revival, for example, has now had a significant effect on traditional quilting techniques. Quilting books, magazines, and newsletters clutter our libraries and newsstands. No corner of our vast country is safe from tourism, and federal programs occasionally reach those for whom they are intended. All these influences should be considered particularly when we look at any potentially marketable craft.

But, at the same time, we must remember that some privacy remains in American life. Commercial ventures, the media, and the federal government often fail to impinge upon the everyday lives of the

resilient folk. One researcher said that it would be “difficult for fieldworkers to find craftspeople not influenced by the ‘revival’ and its educational institutions.”⁴ Such is not the case. Many traditional craftspeople carry out their work unfettered and uninterrupted by scholars, book salesmen, craft shop owners, social workers, and probably even field researchers for the Library of Congress.

Occasionally we did intrude, however, and the observations made in this paper are based on tape-recorded interviews with sixteen Blue Ridge quilters and informal discussions with many other quilters, craft shop owners, and residents in parts of eight rural counties—Carroll, Floyd, Patrick, and Grayson in Virginia, and Alleghany, Ashe, Surry, and Wilkes in North Carolina. I located informants by visiting craft shops, talking to county extension agents, and simply driving around the countryside. Sixteen hundred photographs, primarily of quilts, provide the visual documentation for this essay, and 102 pages of field notes add some contextual background to these mechanical images.

In searching for Blue Ridge quilts and quilters, I looked for some pattern in the visual and verbal images that bombarded me each day. Was it geographical? Did North Carolina quilts and quilting techniques differ from Virginia’s? Did quilts “up the mountain” vary from their counterparts “down the mountain”? No such simple answer emerged. Instead of a pattern of geographical variation, I found a somewhat blurry pattern of socioeconomic differences. Women living within one or two miles of one another created items that reflected their unique lifestyles, purposes, values, and finally individual styles. I chose to call these two types of quilts the plain and the fancy.

In using these two terms, I am not simply referring to the surface appearance of the quilt as most folk art historians do.⁵ Rather I am speaking of the cluster of conceptual and behavioral processes shared by the women who make each type of quilt. I am focusing on the fabrics used in the quilt top and the techniques used to piece or applique it, the filler or lining the quilters use, the quilting thread and the stitches they make, the way the quilt is bound, and finally the use to which the quilt is put. Plain quilters share a common set of values in these and other matters as do their fancy counterparts.

Plain quilting, with its roots firmly planted in tradition, was born of necessity and nurtured by both white and black cultural traditions in the area. As one woman explains, “Just so we had quilts for our own use. That’s all we thought about in them days. That’s how people kept warm then, you know. They didn’t keep their houses warm all night like they do now. We depended on those quilts to keep warm.” To a lesser degree, fancy quilting also existed in the Blue Ridge, but the tradition has been strongly influenced by the quilting revival and a host of outside forces, especially federal and state poverty programs, tourism, and national publications.

Several words of caution are necessary here. First, the words “fancy” and “plain” come from the quilters themselves. Fancy quilting is a label promoted by quilting books and newsletters, but the women of the region also call themselves and others “fancy quilters.”⁶ Zenna Todd, for example, tried to describe a fancy quilt to me that same afternoon:

A fancy quilt I would call one that was pieced by a pattern and quilted around each piece on each side of a seam and then if it was put together with say one piece block and then a solid block. Then do some kind of real pretty design in the solid block. Then you do the border then to correspond with the quilting you did in the solid. Now that’s what I would call a fancy.

Next she went on to discuss the plain quilt. “The other kind,” she said, “would be just something that you would need to keep the bed warm.” The term “plain” then is used less often by the quilters to refer to women who make primarily utilitarian quilts.

Second, there is considerable cross-over between the two categories. Most fancy quilters began as plain quilters; some women now make both types—the plain to use at home and the fancy to sell. “If I make a fancy one, I sell it,” Ruth Holbrook of Traphill, North Carolina, says. Then she describes how she makes the rag quilts as she calls them:

The ones that I use at the house, there’s not much work in them. I stick them on the sewing machine and sew them up, and then quilt them with stitches about a quarter or eighths long so they’ll hold together, and throw them on the bed and go on.

Finally, little communication takes place between the two groups, and there seems to be little familiarity with the types of quilts made by a neighbor who participates in a different quilting network.

II. Plain Quilts. Twelve out of sixteen quilters I interviewed could be called plain quilters. Sociologists would probably place most at the lower end of the Blue Ridge socioeconomic scale, and because of this, the women share a similar world view and set of domestic values. The quilts they make display certain common characteristics that readily reflect the unique vision of their creators. They are born of necessity and meant to be used when people “got good and cold”; because of this they are made quickly from bits and pieces of dark fabrics generally found in today’s clothing. In working with very limited resources, these quilters show as much ingenuity as their needle-wielding ancestors did. They stitch block patterns almost exclusively with the LeMoyne Star, a favorite motif. The blocks are then stitched into strips and later into standard sized quilts. In terms of quilting process, then, the greatest continuity of tradition is found in the plain quilt.

In function, the plain quilt was, and still is, made because it is needed as a bedcover. Blue Ridge winters are cold, and those interesting vernacular houses are drafty and cold. Rug weaver Mazie Beamer describes her large I-house for me:

It was just a frame house. There was no insulation. They didn't storm-side houses then; they just put up their weather boarding, and then they sealed with beaded sealing inside, and there was no way...When the wind blew and the snow come, it snowed in the house too. I know when you get up of a morning, you'd have to get upstairs to the attic and scoop up, sometimes the snow would be six inches deep up there, and you gotta get that out before you got the house warm enough for it to melt and run down through. So you always had to move around when it was that kind of weather.

Obviously, she continues, "When you lived in a cold, cold house, you had to have a lot of quilts to keep you warm." Roxie Ray's father slept with anywhere from five to seven quilts on his bed, and another woman claims, "We couldn't turn over" at night because the quilts were so heavy. Although most Blue Ridge homes are warmer today than they once were, these quilters still cling to their old habits of making quilts from heavy materials, filling them with thick batting or blankets, and creating an item that weighs heavily on the body at night.

The plain quilt represents a salvage craft at its very best. Tops are pieced with any kind of material found around the house and farm—feedsacks, old clothing, and scraps from homemade clothing. "Whatever you had you had to use it," said Roxie Ray, a quilter from Poplar Springs, North Carolina. "You had to figure out some way to use it because people didn't have the money, and my folks wasn't the only ones that didn't have it. It just wasn't there." Her ingenious family made strip quilts from old sandpaper belts retrieved by her father from the furniture factory in nearby Elkin:

It was sandbelts that run the sander at the furniture factory where my Daddy worked. When the sand was wore off them, they'd take them off and put a new one on. They'd reach across this room and more. One of these long belts, you know, that run those wheels, and they'd just throw them away. Well, my father got to bringing them home, and he found you could put them in a tub of water and soak them, and all that sand would come off. Then mother would take them and boil them, and they'd be white, and then she'd dye them pink, or green, and make strip quilts out of it like that. And the lining, top, and back. And she would tack them though.

Later some quilters could afford to buy special fabrics for their quilts, and as Zenna Todd points out, their quilting improved:

I didn't do the fancy thing about quilting, like cutting out by patterns. At that time we didn't have too much to do with, and we would just sew them up every how the pieces come, you know. Call it crazy quilt. But then as the years advanced, we got on up where we could buy a little better material and cut out by patterns and piece.

But most plain quilters still use scraps from sewing and old clothing given to them by family and friends. If they buy fabrics they still cling to those standards of the past. White, for example, is not a popular color in these quilts. "Most of the time, we tried to make the quilts dark regardless of the pattern," Roxie Ray recalls, "and we tried to get dark outing. Gray outing they called it, to make the linings out of." White is

seldom found in quilts meant to be used; instead the brightly colored solids, large prints, and plaids of everyday clothing predominate. Finally, because so many fabrics used in sewing today are man-made, plain quilts are often created from both woven and double-knit polyester.

These quilts are frequently filled with homemade cotton batting, blankets from the local Chatham Blanket factory in Elkin, North Carolina, old clothing, and less often, store-bought Mountain Mist filler. Zenna Todd recalls that her mother-in-law used to make her own warm wool batting:

She would buy this wool when people would shear their sheeps. She would go and get this wool and wash it, and then she had cards, what she called cards. I had never seen any until after I was married. She would card this wool, and it would be about a three by six inch little batts. She'd lay them in a box; when she got ready to fix her quilts, she'd get them out and put them on there. Oh it just made one of the wonderfulest quilts you've ever seen. It would be so soft and so warm. That real sheep wool. But it was a lot of work in it, but you know, people had more time than they had money at that time.

Wool seldom appears as a filler in today's quilts except in the form of new blankets or worn-out clothing. When old clothes are used as filler, the seams are ripped apart, the worn parts cut out, and the pieces simply laid on the lining or basted together to form one piece.

The linings and joinings, on the other hand, are often made from feed sacks, either dyed or not, old sheets, or curtains. Again, Roxie Ray remembers the fabrics used to line the quilt and to set or join the blocks in the top:

We used to buy our linings out of feed sacks or get domestic and dye them. Plain old factory cloth. We'd dye it with different colors, and sew a seam and that would just be seventy-two inches wide. It was only thirty-six inches. And then two and a half for the lining. But everybody back in my days, they couldn't buy stuff to set them together with, so we used whatever we had. Costed too much especially where there's a big bunch of kids to sew for. They had scraps, they called them, and they used that.

Two quilters told me they pieced together small smoking-tobacco sacks to make a quilt lining. They split the unbleached muslin sacks, washed them, and stitched them together to make a perfectly suitable lining.

Some Blue Ridge women collected the thread to piece the quilts and sometimes to quilt them by unravelling worn-out socks or feed sacks, winding the thread on a spool and using it later in the quilt. Maggie Schockley of Hillsville, Virginia, still uses the thread her mother unravelled from socks or later collected from factories:

She would ravel old stockings, and I have seen her take, you know, material was pretty good at that time, and she would pull the ravellings off the edge of the material and double it together and use it to quilt. The tops of socks was always made out of just a little bit better material than the other cotton, and she saved all the little sock tops and ravelled that off and made the balls.



Figure 1. Strip quilt with fan quilting made by Donna Choate, Sparta, North Carolina. Geraldine Johnson, BR8-1-20544/36A.

We are grateful to the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress for providing prints from the collection created by the Blue Ridge Folklife Project. Photograph identifications are followed by the photographer's name and the project negative file number.

Then later in years, in the past 20 years, I guess, there would be different people who worked at factories where they used threads, and the little dabs of thread that was left on the cones, they would bring it to her, and I have balls of this thread now that she has wound up and that I do my piecing with.

Tacking a quilt demanded even more ingenuity. "We didn't have nothing," Roxie Ray says, "only just those...thrums from the mill we tacked with, or a nickle ball of tobacco twine."

The fan, frequently highlighted by using a thread of a contrasting color, was by far the most popular quilting pattern for these women. Elizabeth Smith of Mount Airy, North Carolina, used to buy her mother's number eight quilting thread, and her choice of color depended upon the shades in the quilt top. "If it was a real light color, she'd use dark thread, and if it was a dark color, she'd use the white thread. So it would show, her design would." Apparently the stitches were meant to be visible in direct contradiction to those values usually associated with Pennsylvania-German quilting traditions.

Fan quilting represents most clearly the tensions between old and new, plain and fancy quilting in the Blue Ridge. Used almost universally in older regional quilts, this pattern may well reflect the Anglo

heritage of the region. A similar pattern, called sea wave, was "popular among Welsh workers," and the fan itself seems to be found everywhere except in those regions dominated by Pennsylvania-German quilting traditions.⁷ Ruth Holbrook calls it the "easiest and the oldest quilting pattern." Another quilter claims that she does "mostly what the old folks call the fan pattern and put about four lines in the fan." Finally it may be that sense of heritage that keeps the quilting pattern alive, for even fancy quilter Crystal Cruise used it in about forty percent of her quilts. She remembers her mother laying off the fans with chalk:

That's how I learned to lay off was by watching my mother lay off with the chalk and the cord. Laying off the fans, I remember so well watching her as a child even. That's how she did her quilting. I never saw her quilt a quilt other than by fans, and she did a lot of them.

The semi-circular lines both hold the filler tightly and follow the natural movement of the arm as it moves across the quilt top making the pattern easy to quilt. Roxie Ray believes she is anatomically suited to fan quilting:

Now quilting is right down my alley. That's my hobby. And I always get the fans. I reach out the farthest of any of the rest cause I got the longest legs, and the longest arms, and the longest feet of any in the bunch....I am really long cause I'm a big person. I'm not too fat, but you'd be surprised how much I weigh cause I've got a body. So I reach out yonder, see, this is the way you reach out for a quilt, you know.

Although fan quilting is still popular in the Blue Ridge, these quilters seldom emphasize their stitches by using a contrasting thread. Instead threads that match either the lining or the quilt top are chosen, and thus even these women are moving away from the aesthetic values of the past.

Fan quilting itself may be an endangered species among both plain and fancy quilters in the region because it is so often ignored by quilting newsletters and roundly condemned by at least one craft shop owner along the Blue Ridge Parkway. "I was quilting for one lady," Zenna Todd told me. "She wanted me to do some quilts for her one time...and she says, for goodness sake, don't do any in the fan. Says I don't like that." Thus because the most traditional and distinctive quilting pattern in the region is perceived as somehow inferior to the more fancy Germanic tastes of outsiders, it may become obsolete.

These women also care very little about small, even quilting stitches. They all joke about their handwork, saying they make stitches so big "they have to be careful they don't hang up their toenails in them at night." Roxie Ray even claims that "it's much better to have them a little bit long. They used to make those little, tenney-weeney, short stitches," she says, "and they'd make them so short that they'd punch back

through" the quilt top. Large stitches, of course, made the quilting easier and faster, but if the women felt particularly rushed, they tacked these quilts using the regular tacking method or what one quilter calls secret or hidden tacking. "We tacked more quilts than we quilted," rug weaver Thelma Melton said, "because it was quicker and there was so much to do we didn't have time to do this fancy stitching and all that." Ruth Holbrook, however, refused to tack a quilt unless she was "covering an old quilt." Even then, she continues, "somebody else gets that on their bed. The tacks tickle my face. The string gets in my mouth."

To finish the quilt, most plain quilters would do as Carrie Severt describes, either bring the quilt lining up over the top and stitch it down by hand, or fold the top down over the lining. She makes her decision based on both practical and aesthetic considerations:

Sometimes I turn the lining up on the top, and sometimes I turn the top down on the lining. You can hem them either way you want to do it. It's just according to what color they are, and what color the lining is. If the lining matches the top pretty good, I put the lining up on top of the top. But it works both ways.

Few would go to the additional expense or work of making a piece of bias tape to bind the quilt's edge.

Everyday quilts made primarily for warmth can be divided into three categories. Many women choose to follow a specific pieced pattern, usually borrowed from a friend or neighbor, but others prefer the string quilt, and still others the strip quilt.

String quilts carry several different labels in the Blue Ridge; they may be called block, rag, or even crazy quilts. The true string quilt consists of scraps of fabric stitched onto a square of old cloth or a piece of paper. The largest piece of fabric runs diagonally from corner to corner of the block, and the remaining pieces are stitched to it. Then, the loose ends of the strips are cut following the paper pattern, and the resulting blocks sewn together. Ila Patton of Galax recalls using pages from the Sears, Roebuck or Wards catalog for her paper patterns:

We used to use old catalogs. It was paper, you know, the sheets out of it, it was thin, and it wasn't as rotten as the thicker paper would be. Take the leaves out of, well, we called it Roebuck catalog, Wards, we'd just tear them pages out, and just piece them and then sew them together.

Black quilter Donna Choate doubts that catalogs were used by her neighbors; she says, "Course they wouldn't hardly tear up a catalog. They was a rarity in those days." She recalls, too, that some women left the paper on the square to make the quilt warmer:

I'd hear people laughing and talking and saying, yeah, leave that paper, make it that much warmer. All the ladies would do it. Piece it on a piece of paper, and then when they got that square done, they laid it right on that quilt. Leave that paper there. Now Mama pieced on paper sometimes, but she tore the paper off. She never did leave the paper on the square.

The blocks, with or without the paper, were either sewn directly to one another or joined with a two to three inch strip of material called a joining.

Both black and white area quilters make strip and string quilts. One black quilter pieces strip quilts exclusively, but another had only one in her collection of six quilts. Among white quilters, preferences are equally as mixed. Mazie Beamer says she "pieced one crazy quilt fashion, and it almost made me crazy." Ila Patton, however, prefers what she calls a crazy quilt:

I'll tell you, I'd used to just rather piece them in little strips every way and every color. I liked them that way. I called them crazy quilts. That's the way I most always pieced mine. I didn't hardly cut any patterns. It took a lot more material when you cut a pattern, and when you piece them crazy, you can just use every little scrap in it.

Frequently these quilts were tacked or quilted in the fan, and when fan quilting is used, the visual tension created by the rectangular strips and the primarily circular fans is most intriguing. Area quilters claim these quilt tops and quilting patterns were "easy to make," but the complex visual appeal, heightened by the contrasting thread, certainly played some role as Carrie Severt notes:

Now some you can lay it off in fans, what they call fans, and when you quilt that, you see, them shows up there pretty. And some of them where you quilt them like they're pieced, they don't show up as pretty as the fans does.

Mamie Bryan, who is "just awful to make quilts," is one of two black quilters I interviewed. The dozen quilts she had neatly stored in her bedroom clearly represent her repertoire and add further evidence to Vlach's theory that a separate black quilting aesthetic modified basic Anglo-American forms.⁸ Mrs. Bryan, however, also shares certain characteristics with her plain quilting neighbors. She learned how to quilt after she married to provide a warm cover for her family:

Len's mother showed me how to quilt. I married when I was just about 15 going on 16. I was young when I married. She showed me how to do my work. I didn't know too much about quilting. I married and came in the house with her, and she showed me how to quilt, how to piece, and things like that. So I learned. Cause I needed them anyhow, so I had to learn.

Later quilting became a way to ward off the loneliness of a big two story I-house while her husband worked in the West Virginia coal mines or spent the evening fox hunting with his friends. "He went out fox hunting," she says, "and I'd sit and piece quilts while he was out hunting. Me and the children. I'm glad it's all over with."

All of Mamie Bryan's quilts are block or strip, pieced "by the finger," and tacked or quilted in the fan. She uses no pattern, and just "kinda matches up [her] colors to make them look pretty." Feed sack linings, most often dyed by Mrs. Bryan, form the colorful linings for her quilts. She used every scrap available to her in those days; "I had to

save everything," she says, "and piece everything that I could get to keep us warm. Sorta hard living back yonder." She also used old clothing for the filler in her quilts:

You couldn't get everything you wanted then. Everything was hard to get ahold of. I'd use sheets, and then sometimes if I'd wash our clothes and just tear out the good pieces like a skirt, just take the band off...and wash it nice and clean and lay it right in there. That would be for your padding.

Mamie Bryan may tell the outsider that her quilts are "sorry stuff," but she also recognizes them as special items to hand down to her children.

One silk quilt Mrs. Bryan thinks "more of...than I do of any of them" is actually a counterpane completed by Mr. Bryan's mother sometime before 1958. It is appliqued in an elaborate Dutch Girl pattern and tufted around each square. Mrs. Bryan wanted to put the fragile counterpane to better use, so she bought silk pieces for one dollar and turned the counterpane into a string quilt:

I kept the counterpane a long time, and I decided that I didn't want to use it on the bed just for a counterpane, and I was going to make a quilt out of it. So I just went and bought me some silk pieces...and made a silk top to it. It's beautiful.

After she had stitched the silk squares together, she used white thread to quilt the entire piece in the fan or squared fan pattern.

Obviously this heirloom was valuable to the Bryans; the fact that Mrs. Bryan actually paid money to buy fabric is a testimony to that fact. She also spent a considerable amount of time piecing the quilt; "that was the hardest one I've ever pieced in my life," she says. "I had a job with that quilt." Thus the strip piecing and white fan quilting were not simply utilitarian devices for Mrs. Bryan, but instead clear examples of her Afro-American aesthetic values at work.

Mamie Bryan also started what she labelled a Log Cabin quilt, but the item that emerged represents a battleground of personal values more clearly than most quilts. She made four or five Log Cabin blocks that closely resemble the patterns suggested by Vlach; later she said she just got tired of it because it went so slowly, and she created the rest of the quilt from her own improvisational blocks:⁹

His mother had a log cabin quilt...and I wanted to learn how to make one. So I started mine, but I got tired of it. I got along too slow. So I quit. But now you can tell it. Here's the blocks. Them's the blocks I got pieced, and I got tired of that log cabin. Now she called it a log cabin quilt. Blocks. So I got tired of that, and I says I'm going to piece my own to get the quilt done. So I just pieced mine any way I wanted. All of them's in blocks and strips....I said well I didn't have but four blocks. I said I'll put it right in the middle of my quilt. I couldn't finish it. It was too slow.

Did fatigue or impatience cause her to change her pattern, or did the improvisational blocks seem visually more appealing to her? We can only guess.



Figure 2. Mamie Lee and Leonard Bryan of Sparta, North Carolina, standing in front of the Dutch Girl counterpane made by Leonard Bryan's mother. Lyntha Eiler, BR8-2-20414/4.

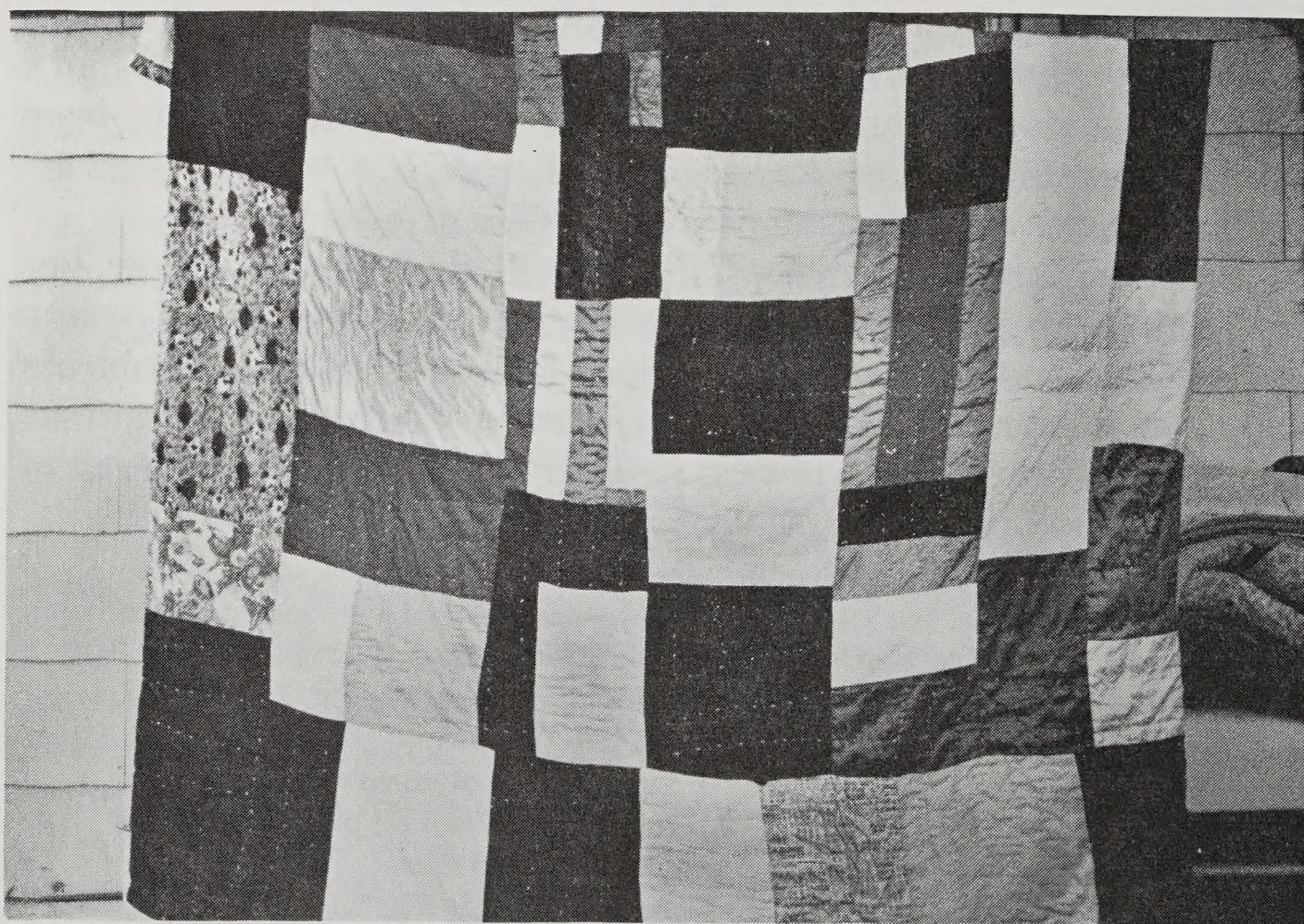


Figure 3. Reverse side of the counterpane made into a silk strip quilt by Mamie Lee Bryan. Lyntha Eiler, BR8 LE 31-6 (original in color).

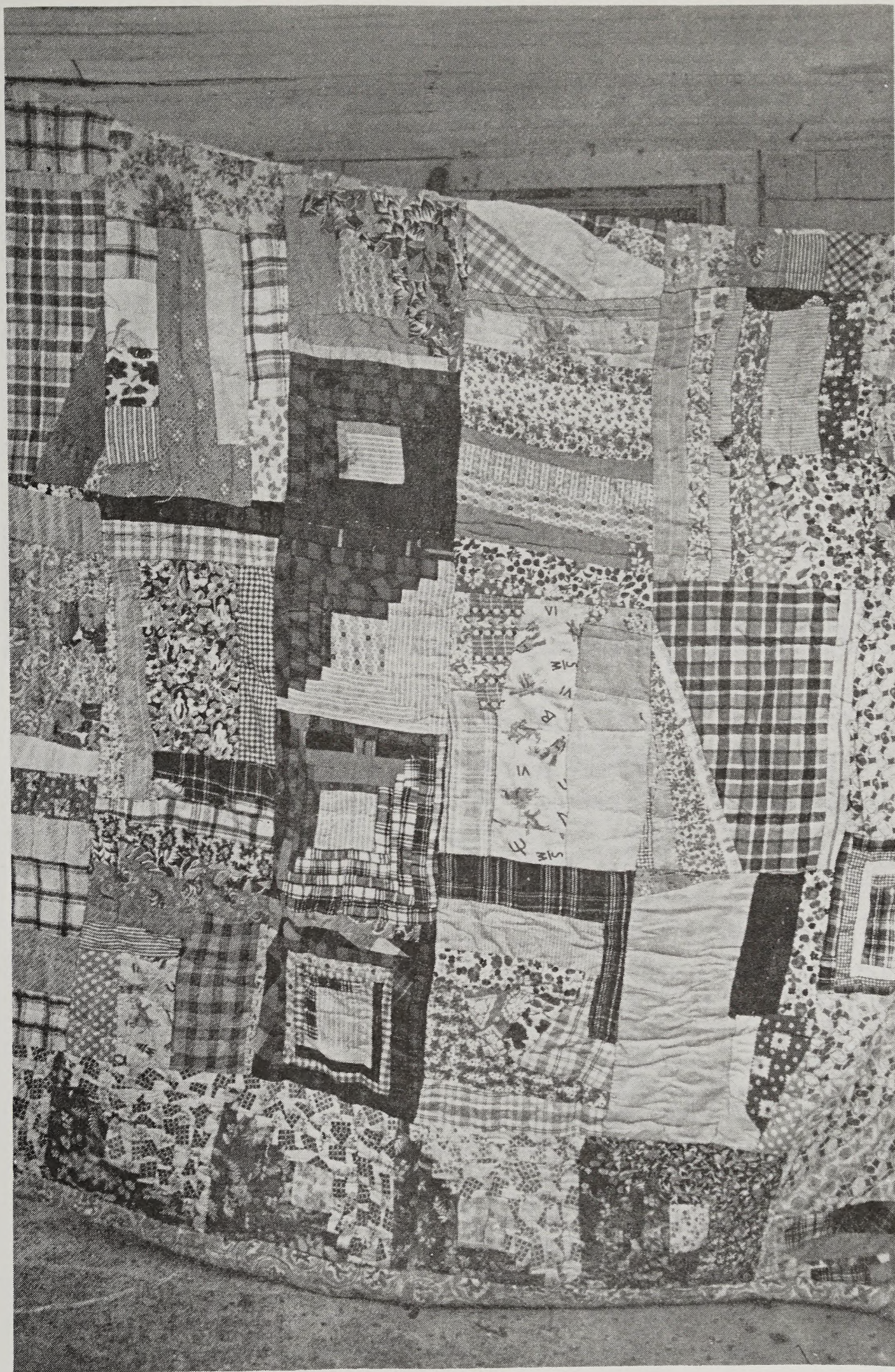


Figure 4. Log Cabin quilt started by Mamie Lee Bryan. The five blocks were “too slow” to piece so she pieced the rest of the quilt in blocks and strips. Lyntha Eiler, BR8-12-20414/25.

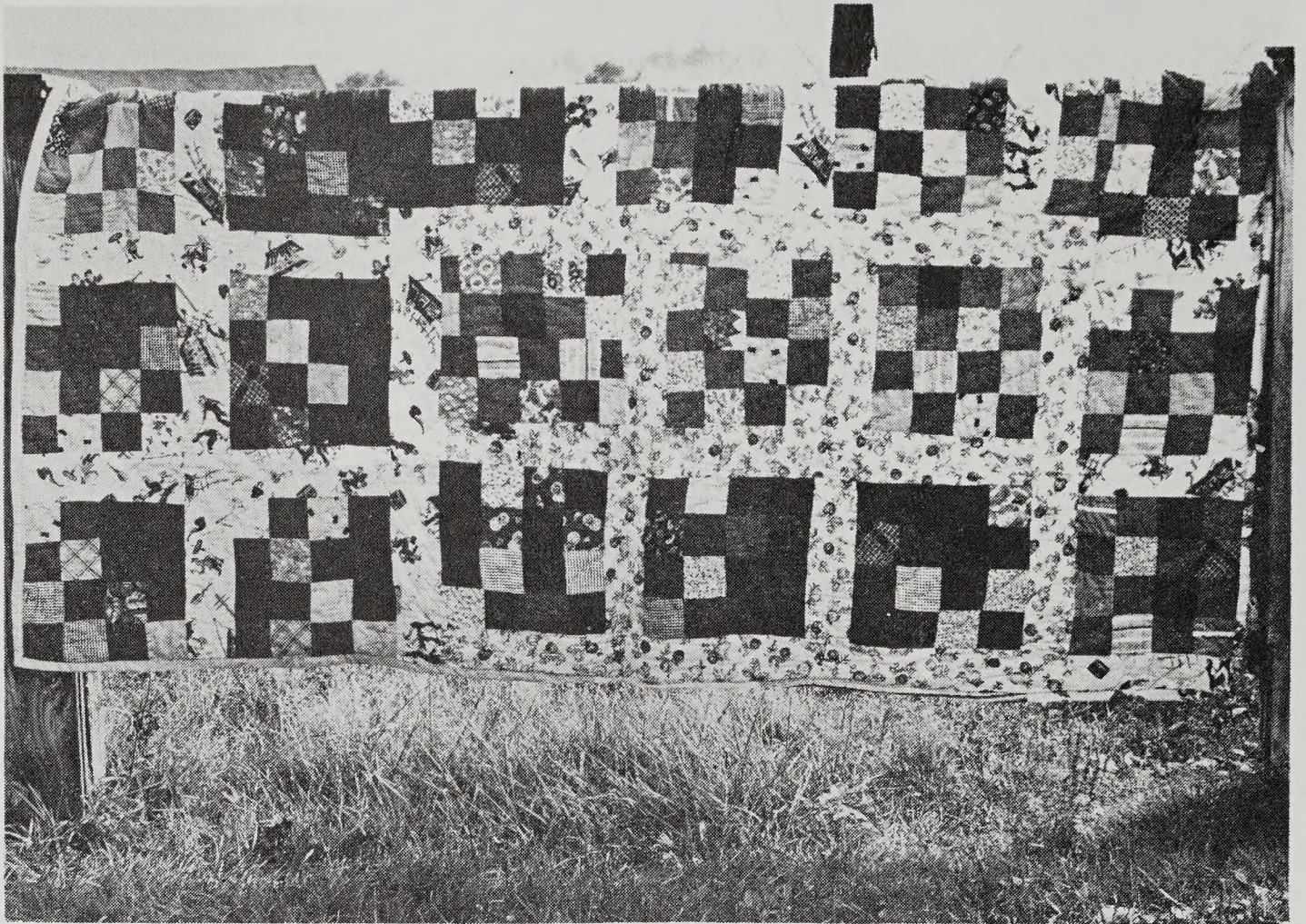


Figure 5. Donna Choate's Nine Patch quilt. Geraldine Johnson, BR8-12-20544/7.

Donna Choate, on the other hand, is a black quilter whose mother "came up with white people." Only one out of six of her quilts is a strip quilt; one was simply a quilted floral sheet, and two others were rather precise pieced patterns. "Black people had it pretty rough," she says, and when she visited her friends, she noticed that "their quilts were not as good." Design or pattern is the characteristic that distinguished her family's quilts, and it is a value that remains with her until today:

Well, I would think the design would be the main thing about a quilt. Because if you just piece up a strip just in any form, amount or any, it doesn't harmonize, it's not going to be very pretty. I'd rather piece my pieces, make squares, and put them together. Now a lot of people they have strip, a strip of this kind, a strip, they go to the store and buy remnants, you know, and make quilts. And they have all kind of colors. But mother taught us to use designs. If I was to make one now, it'd be some kind of design, I don't know what it would be.

A nine patch pattern completed by Mrs. Choate several years ago, however, showed that same random arrangement of blocks suggestive of black improvisation in quilt making.¹⁰

Not far from the Choate farm lives Carrie Severt, a quilter who uses approximately twenty to twenty-five quilts in her home. About one-fifth of them are strip quilts consisting of large squares and rectangles of dark brown, gray, blue, and black. The rest of her quilts include such familiar pieced patterns as Lone Star, the Tree, and the Wheel.



Figure 6. Quilts made by Carrie Severt of Ennice, North Carolina, airing out on the front porch of her home. Geraldine Johnson, BR8 GJ 13-9 (original in color).

Several others are similar to Mamie Bryan's quilts; the patterns tend to be less discernible because Pennsylvania-German quilting standards are not carefully heeded by Mrs. Severt.

The Severts' handsome rented farmhouse is made even grander on days when Carrie Severt airs out her quilts. "If you ain't used them too much," she says, "airing does them as much good as washing them." She washes the heavy quilts only once a year, but airs them as she feels it is necessary.

Carrie Severt gets her quilting patterns from neighbors, friends and family members, and makes her own cardboard and sandpaper templates to use in piecing. Like most plain quilters, she refuses to buy patterns or make applique quilts. Once she bought some applique patterns, but found the process entirely too wasteful:

I ordered me a bunch of patterns one time out of a magazine some way, but I never have thought too much of them. They're pretty, but it takes a whole lot of stuff to fix one of the things. You've got to have material to sew these patterns down on it, and some of them it takes great big old long pieces to put them designs on there.

Thus pieced patterns better suit her thrifty nature.

Carrie Severt is an avid quilter, and during one winter pieced over forty quilt tops. For her it is not simply another household chore, but an activity that engages her emotionally and intellectually:

But, law, I'd rather quilt than eat. I love that quilting. I ain't too good a hand at it, but I just dearly love it. My husband gets so mad at me he could

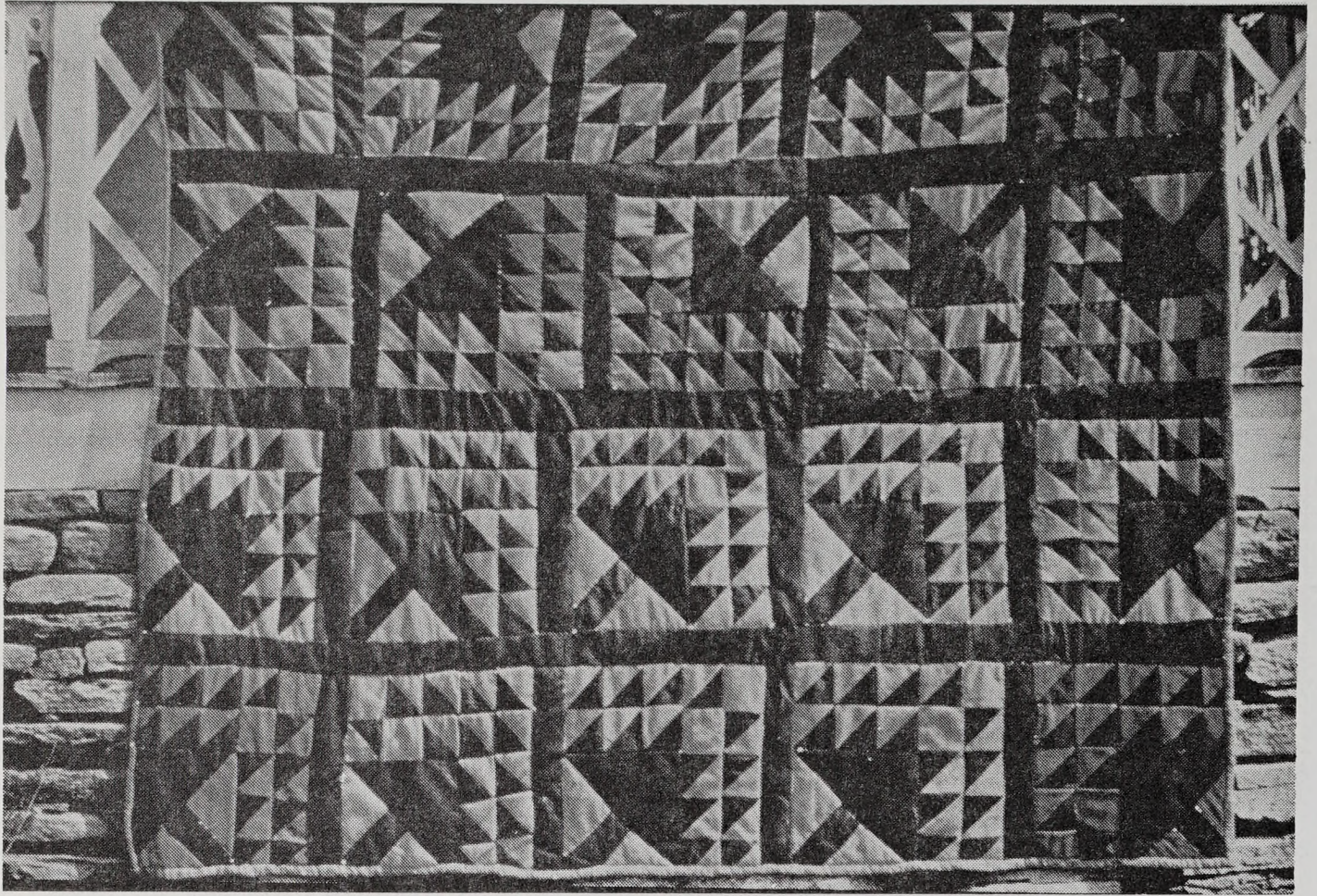


Figure 7. Tree quilt made by Carrie Severt. Lyntha Eiler, BR8 LE 30-1 (original in color).

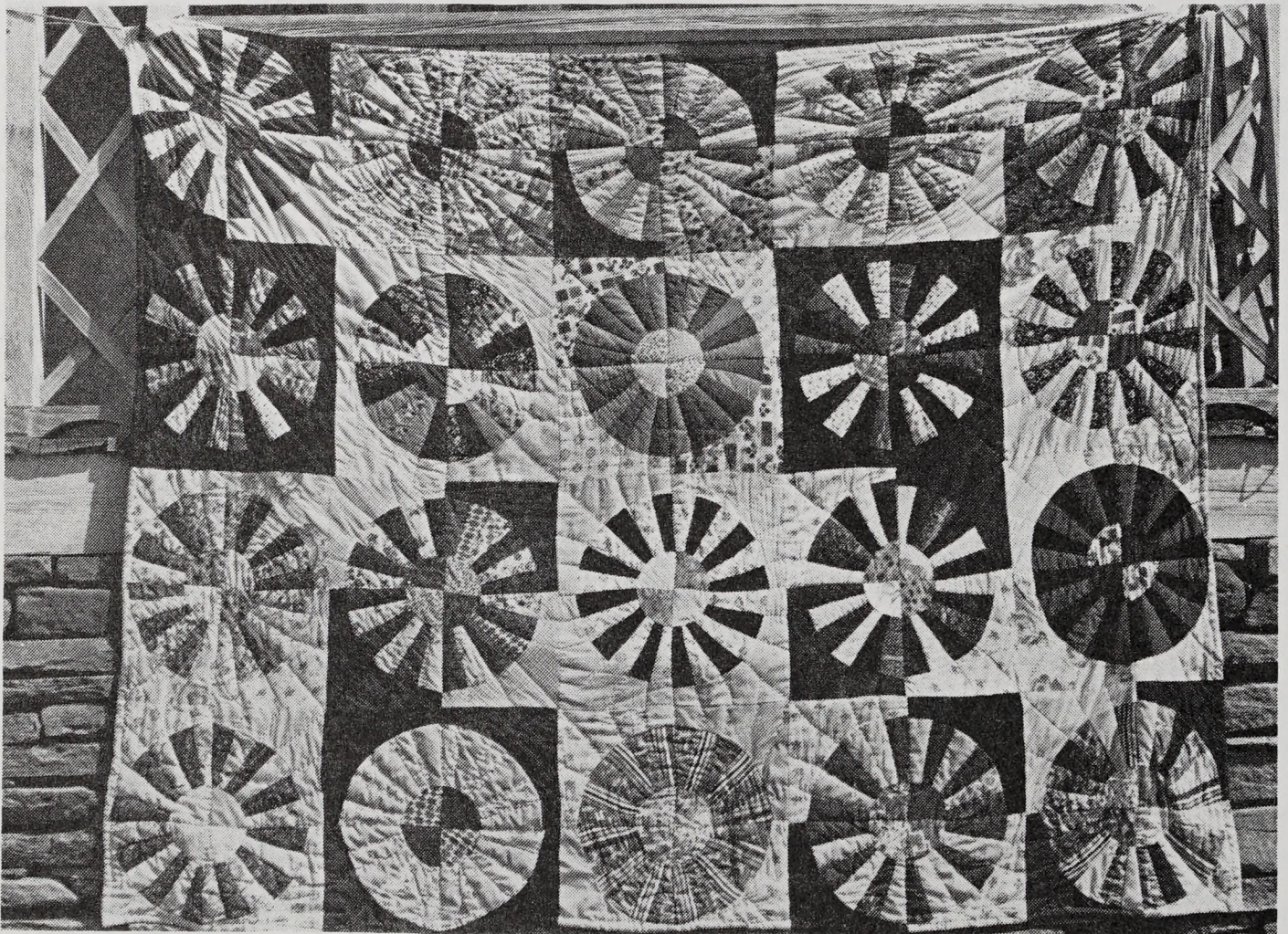


Figure 8. Carrie Severt's Wheel quilt. Lyntha Eller, BR8-7-20346/21A.

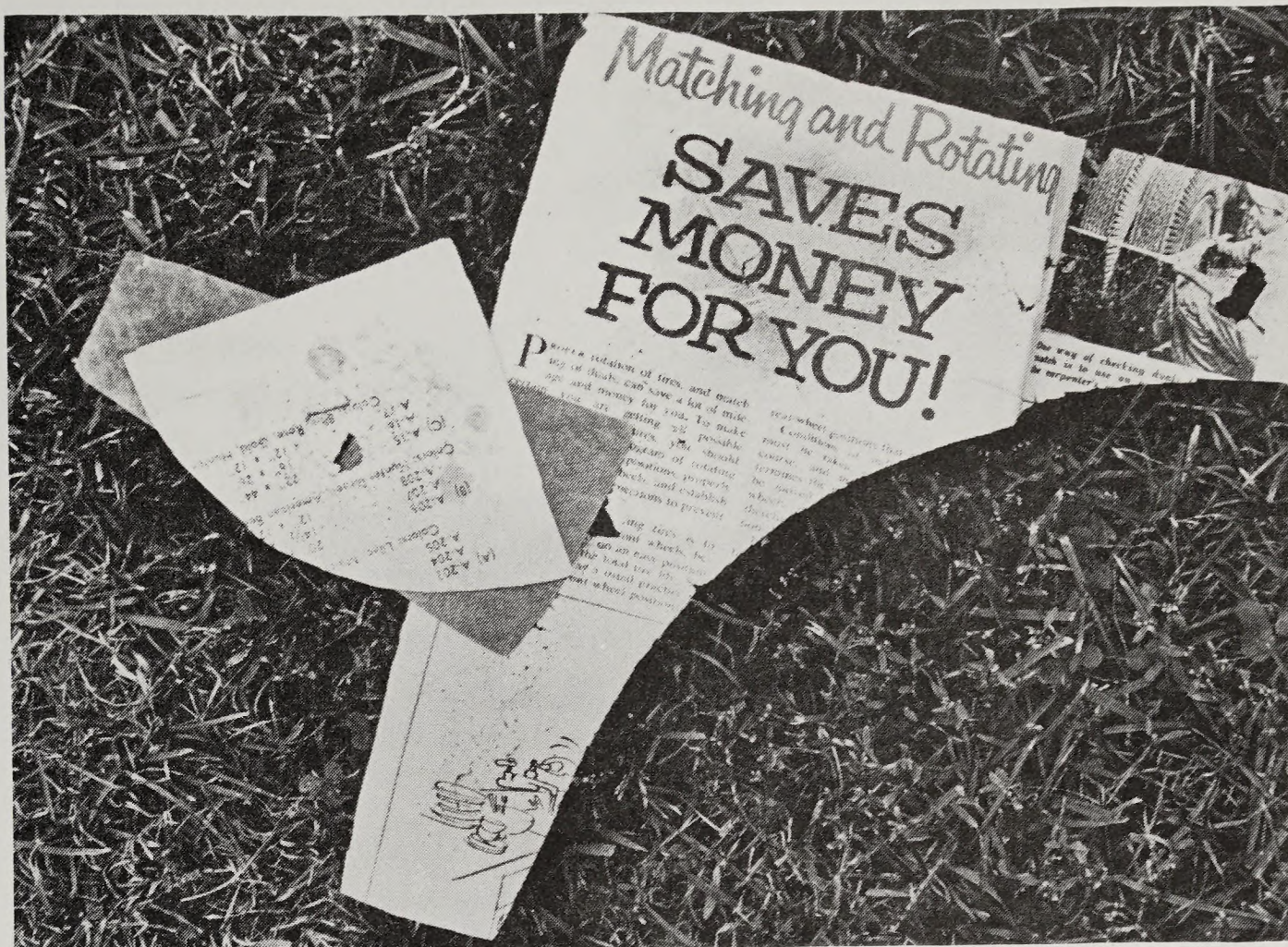


Figure 9. Cardboard templates used by Carrie Severt for the Wheel quilt. Lyntha Eiler, BR8-5-20776/7.

kill me. He said I'd sit here and piece them old quilts and let him starve to death. I told him I'd rather quilt than eat. But I never let him get hungry. I always fix his meals.

During the winter, she quilts alone in her bedroom after helping her husband with the outdoor chores. He may grumble about her devotion to quilting, but he good-naturedly draws off the fan patterns for her with a piece of chalk and a string:

But I always make my husband lay mine off. Cause he can do a better job than I can. He can keep it more evenner than I can. But he's always laid mine off for me. I'll make out like to him I can't lay them off. I could.

The Wheel quilt is one of Carrie Severt's favorite patterns. It allows her to use efficiently the many scraps of fabric given to her by friends and neighbors. She will use any type of fabric for her quilts; thus polyester double-knit, flannel, and even blanket material, often appear in the spokes of her wheels. White is the only color banished from her color schemes; "You can use a little white in the quilt," she says, "but I don't like too much white. It's too easy to show dirt." She makes no attempt to coordinate the colors or patterns of fabrics even in the four sections of background material. The result is a bold quilt that adds a riot of color and pattern to her simply decorated, almost austere, bedrooms.

The Lone Star and Tree quilts illustrate Carrie Severt's preference for solid, rich colors. The Tree quilt is also a fine example of her lack of concern for exact repetition and precision in creating the blocks in a

quilt. Some trees face different directions, and others have fewer branches than their neighbors. The joinings are not of equal width, and corners frequently do not meet. A rigid adherence to a superimposed set of rules is not a part of Mrs. Severt's aesthetic sensibility. Improvisation, in other words, may play a greater role in white quilting traditions than we had previously thought.

Naturally most women do not fit neatly into one category or the other. Quilters like Ila Patton have always made both plain and fancy quilts. Other women, such as Ruth Holbrook, are plain quilters who were plucked out of their community, sent to college, and taught the rules of fancy quilting. Still other women, such as Josie Goad, have adapted their plain quilting techniques to the demands of the tourist market. The quilt patterns she uses are familiar, the colors bold, the linings often figured sheets, and the familiar fan quilting predominates, but the quilt has been refined slightly to make it a more appealing item.

Ila Patton's quilt collection clearly represents the work of a woman who could piece such contemporary and complicated patterns as the Cathedral Window, but preferred the simpler strip quilt stitched in elaborate fans with contrasting thread. Mrs. Patton also made a regional favorite, the Nine of Diamonds, a simple nine patch turned on its point. One is joined with navy blue joinings and quilted in diagonal lines drawn on with flour and water:

We would dip yarn string in, take a little flour and make a little paste and put that yarn string in it and fasten it from one corner to the other and just flip it, and it would draw these lines clear through, and I believe that's the way this is laid off.

Ila Patton also uses "secret tacking" to stitch her quilts; one long stitch, about an inch long, is hidden in the filler and only the small stitch shows. It is, she says, "a little easier and quicker done."

Basically plain quilters use their ingenuity to create an item that is both useful and visually intriguing. This quilting style most clearly preserves the traditional process of quilting—using scrap materials to make a product for immediate use. These everyday quilts have not received the attention they deserve, and the unique principles of design that underlie them deserve further examination.

III. Fancy Quilts. The fancy quilt, on the other hand, has been analyzed, discussed, and photographed in great detail. Four of the quilters I interviewed are considered fancy or "quality" quilters by their community, and they consider their own work to be fancy quilting. "I call it fancy quilting; I don't know what other people call it," one woman said.

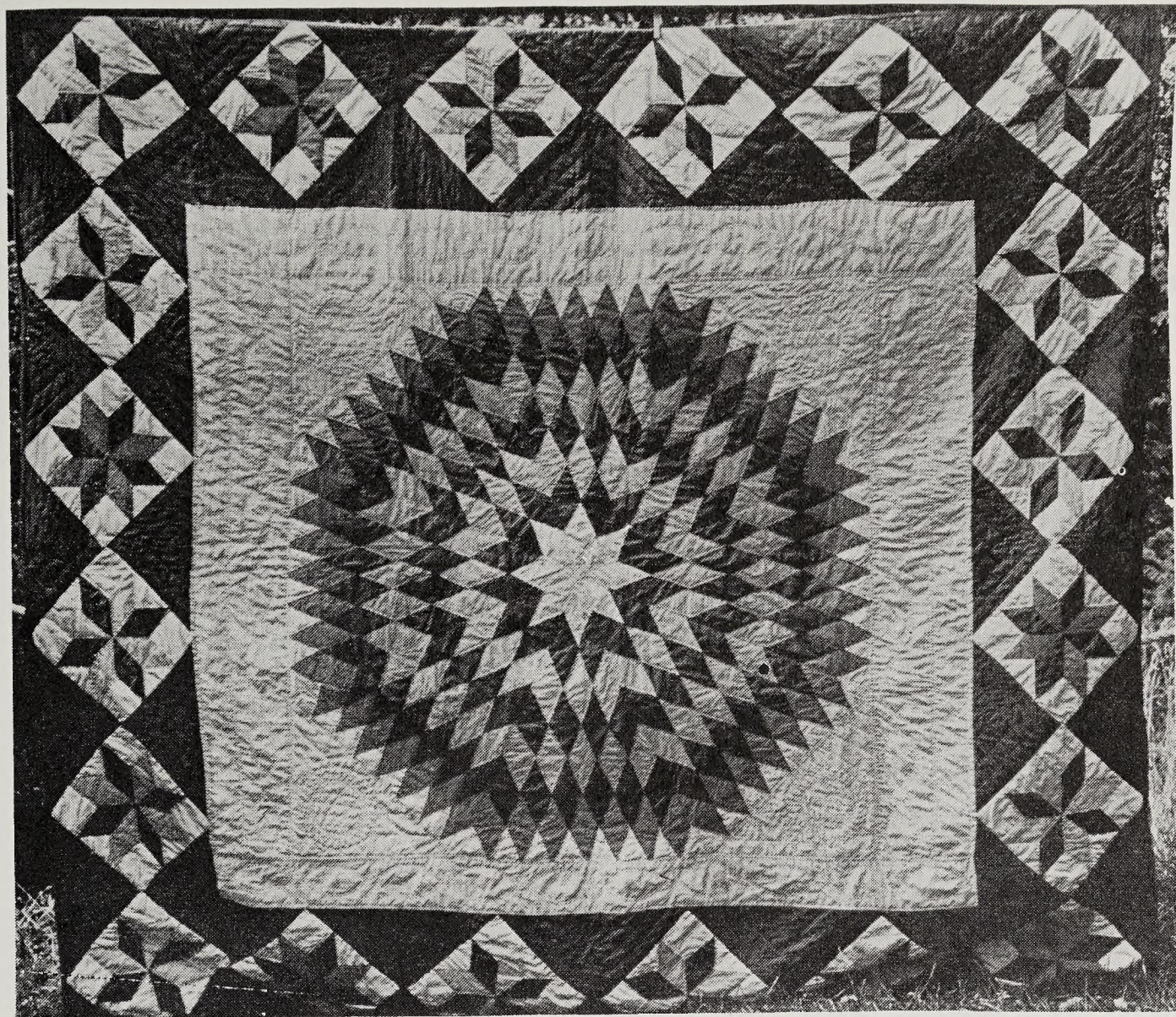


Figure 10. Sunburst quilt made by Lura Stanley of Laurel Fork, Virginia. Terry Eiler, BR8 43-9 (original in color).

Although these women often live within a mile or two of their plain quilting neighbors, they are only vaguely familiar with the quilt made for “service” because their networks are limited to other fancy quilters. Most are college educated, and a few are former school teachers. They get some of their quilting information and inspiration from printed sources—books, magazines, and quilting newsletters. Generally they enjoy a higher socioeconomic status than plain quilters. One woman, for example, quilts with her husband each winter; “it’s good therapy,” she says. They try to complete four or five quilts before they move to Florida for the rest of the winter months.

All fancy quilters grew up in families with strong quilting traditions. Most began as plain quilters, but soon improved their aesthetic and technical skills. “I’ve changed from plain quilting to fancy wreaths and fancy designs,” says Lura Stanley. “Now I quilt for the beauty of a quilt. I make quilts just for the beauty and not really for the service.” These women seldom speak in reverential tones about the quilting of their forebears. Crystal Cruise of Meadows of Dan, Virginia, recalls that her mother’s quilts were “not what I would call pretty.” She continues:

My mother never did a nice job of quilting. She did a lot of quilting, but it was never what I considered a nice job. I guess she didn't have the time. She was a very busy person raising that many children, and my father was sick for fifteen years. I expect it was more or less for warmth that she quilted.

These women recognize that their mothers and grandmothers quilted in the fashion of the day, "more for warmth than beauty," but they also believe that their ancestors just did not know as much about quilting.

These four women have been directly and indirectly influenced by the complex forces that struck the region after 1930. Craft shops grew up along the Blue Ridge Parkway bringing new ideas to the region and offering a sales outlet for the local women who sought both the income and prestige associated with handcraft sales. The most recent quilting revival, which apparently reached the area in the early 1970's, made the craft a socially acceptable and even a desirable skill. Nora Glasco, a fancy quilter from Ennice, North Carolina, most clearly dates the beginnings of that revival in a rather poignant narrative:

My father died about seven or eight years ago, and we were going through the house; they lived in an older type house, and we were going through and kept seeing these raggy quilts. Some of them were just threadbare, but they were beautiful. They were the older type materials. We burned a lot. A few months later, some people came down and told us that these quilts were worth a lot of money.

Craft shop owners from major urban areas now scour the region looking for quilters; local professionals of some prestige—the minister or physician, for example—admire the woman's handwork. But most important are the family members who have a new appreciation of the woman's technical skill and aesthetic judgment and in this subtle way encourage her to spend long hours at the quilting frame producing an item they know will eventually be theirs.

Federal and state programs have also intervened on several levels to influence regional crafts. Government sponsored craft outlets tried to help the quilters improve their skills and thereby increase the marketability of their quilts. One craft shop manager told a quilter that creativity was the essence of craft and urged her to be more creative in her work. Zenna Todd's response is almost a classic statement of the power of tradition even in the mind of the fancy quilter:

They wanted me to come up with some kind of pattern just, you know, that I could do, something that I would think about creating myself. Very creative. But I've never got in on that. I told them I didn't want to concentrate that much on it. I don't mind changing something just a little bit, or maybe doing it a different way to what somebody else has done, but they said that that was really craft when you done that. And I guess it is.

Finally an OEO craft program administered by Appalachian State College in Boone, North Carolina, affected the lives of both low and middle income quilters in the North Carolina portion of our region.

Quilter Ruth Holbrook learned through that program that, although she knew how to quilt, she was doing everything wrong:

I just used the same material that my dresses were made out of. I didn't press my seams open. I did use big thread. I quilted them all in fans. Didn't know no different. Or diamonds. After I read those books, and that lady told me I was doing everything, I knowed how to do it, but I was doing it wrong. I got to matching my colors and material, and things like that. I can sell them faster than I can make them. In fact, they're most of the time sold before they're put in the frame.

Now she makes enough plain quilts to "keep my bed warm," and sells the fancy ones she learned how to make at the college.

In the hands of the fancy quilters, the craft is no longer a salvage craft. These women spend both time and money shopping for fabrics to use as quilt pieces, filler, and linings. As Ruth Holbrook quickly learned, used fabrics have no place in the products of a college trained quilter.

Relatively rigid rules dictate the colors, patterns, and fabric content of a fancy quilt. Fabrics for the quilt top should be a small print in colors that sell well; local women chuckle about the popularity of so-called "earth tones," especially brown. Those were colors seldom found in a quilt until the quilting revival. The print should be nicely coordinated with solid colors, and both should be a cotton or a cotton-polyester fabric. The filler is most often Mountain Mist polyester or a cotton-polyester blend, which gives the quilt a nice, puffy look. The lining should be a solid color, preferably a white or off-white sheet or unbleached muslin. Finally the edges of fancy quilts are usually bound with bias tape, either homemade or store bought, in a color that matches the quilt's top or lining.

Technically these quilts are also very similar. They are quilted in white thread which usually matches the lining, and the quilting is done "by the piece" with elaborate quilting patterns in the solid blocks and around the border. An astonishing amount of creative research goes into developing a unique quilting pattern. Some women borrow patterns from neighbors; others adapt them from pattern books. Nora Glasco traced the outline of an overturned bottle; "it was shaped so pretty," she says, "that I copied it off and made a quilt pattern." These quilters also follow the well-known rules set down for fancy quilting stitches. "They all want them little fine stitches," Ruth Holbrook says. In piecing, the quilter must use sixteen stitches to the inch and in quilting, ten to twelve stitches to the inch.

Although many women may violate one or more of these rules on occasion, their overall purpose in adhering to the general principles of fancy quilting seems clear. They are creating an item with a self-conscious eye to both the past and the future. They are recreating the quilt as they believe it existed in the past. The model they follow,

however, is not that of their own region, but rather the Pennsylvania-German model which has set the standard for this most recent quilting revival. Lura Stanley, for example, searches for hard-to-find small calico prints because "those calicos of a long time ago were small flowers." One craft shop owner bans polyester from her shop and urges her quilters to use cotton filling. "She says it's the old time way of doing it," I was told. Many quilters refuse her request because "it's very hard to quilt, and it just doesn't hold up as well." This careful probing of the past brings with it a corresponding look into the future. Quilts are now made for succeeding generations. "I hope my quilts are here for the...21st century and maybe longer if they're taken care of," says Lura Stanley.

Finally many of these quilts are made to be sold, and their mobility is astounding. Anyone who believes that quilts are still being pieced by little, white-haired women who quilt them alone in their living rooms or with the church quilting bee is hopelessly romantic. Quilts are moving from one end of the continent to the other. Quilt tops pieced in Georgia and Washington are quilted in the Blue Ridge and later shipped back to Washington or on to New England. Quilts are pieced by one woman and quilted by others who send them to a third for resale. Regional patterns at this level are breaking down as quilts move rapidly into and out of a specific community.

One tie that binds these communities together is use; most women who make and women who buy fancy quilts use them in bedrooms as bedspreads. They are an investment meant to be seen and appreciated in an appropriate environment. Only in craft shops did I see quilts and quilt patterns used in unconventional ways. Craft shops frequently display quilts hanging from a wall or covering tables. A quilt pattern on a pillow, obviously, is the most common revival form of quilting, and several fancy quilters make pillows as gifts or for sale in local shops. Very few use them in their own homes.

While many fancy quilts are sold, others are given as special gifts to members of the community. The highest use to which a quilt can be put, however, is to serve as an heirloom for children and grandchildren. The quilters expect their children to use these quilts—as bedspreads more than blankets perhaps—but basically they are to be cherished as a legacy from a skilled parent or grandparent. Scorned is the child who does not appreciate such a gift. "I made my son two real fancy quilts," Ruth Holbrook told me. "He didn't appreciate them. He threw them on the bed, and he smoked and burnt holes in them. Won't get no more."

Lura Stanley, for example, is a fancy quilter who never sells her quilts, but gives them to her children and grandchildren as gifts. "My grandchildren know how to work me," she says with a laugh. She

knows that people could not afford to pay her what these quilts are worth to both her and her family:

The money doesn't excite me at all. I would not sell a quilt. I give my quilts. There's too much time and effort put in a quilt for me to sell. I'd have to have more than people would give for my quilts. They're large; they're large enough for spreads, and there's so much time in them that I don't think people would pay me what I'd have to have for my quilts, so I just give them.

Lura is an unconventional Blue Ridge quilter in many ways. She quilts with a hoop instead of a large quilting frame. This makes her quilts looser than some, but also makes it easier for her to quilt the elaborate circular patterns she finds so appealing. She draws all of her own quilting patterns onto the top of the quilt using a homemade stencil and a soft lead pencil. In making the circular feather wreath, for example, she uses a handy saucer to draw the basic circle and then draws each feather by hand.

Lura does not consider herself the best at making quilts; her work is "passable" she says. When she started quilting some fifteen years ago, she began with the Drunkard's Path, which she quilted "in the seam" instead of one quarter inch from the seam. She did not want her big stitches to show; now her stitches are smaller, but she still uses linings with small prints to hide the stitches on the quilt's reverse side. Because she matches her quilting thread to each color in the quilt top, this patterned lining also masks the variety of thread colors on the back. "I ignore my lining when I'm quilting, and I quilt for the top of the quilt," she says, "the color that the material is."

Mrs. Stanley considers a quilt a "beautiful art work" and thus places her emphasis on the pieced or appliqued quilt top pattern, which she purchases or creates herself. Her prize quilt seems to be a Sunburst pattern copied from a magazine and pieced in the familiar earth tones:

I got it from a little tiny picture in a magazine of some famous quilt in a museum somewhere. Just a little tiny picture, and I thought that was so pretty. It was in color. But it didn't show the outside of the quilt; it just showed the center.

She had no idea how to fill in the border of the quilt and finally made up her own pattern of LeMoyne Stars pieced from various shades of orange, beige, and brown.

Again, toward the end of our Blue Ridge stay, the whole process of field teamwork blossomed during one fascinating morning of work. As I interviewed Mrs. Stanley, Lyntha and Terry Eiler photographed her quilts by hanging them over a line strung between two trees. It was the first time Mrs. Stanley had ever seen them displayed this way, and instead of a mundane discussion of each quilt, I recorded a wonderfully spontaneous outburst of praise for each quilt. "I didn't know they were so pretty," she said softly at first and then much louder. "I had really never seen them outdoors," she continued. "Isn't that gorgeous? It is



Figure 11. Nora Virginia Glasco of Ennice, North Carolina, quilting a Log Cabin quilt. Geraldine Johnson, BR8-5-20544/12.

really.” Finally she concluded, “I don’t usually brag on my handiwork, but when I see them a-hanging out on the line, they do look so pretty.” Clearly the folk aesthetic—the joyous outburst when confronted by the attractive item—was evident in her remarks and reserved for the patterns, color combinations, and quilting on the quilt top.¹¹

Nora Glasco is another fancy quilter who quilts primarily for other people. She, her mother, and her sister used to quilt from ninety to one hundred quilts a year during their peak quilting period. Working from an unfinished store front, they quilted tops for customers both within and outside the region and stitched their own quilts for resale at a nearby craft shop.

The Log Cabin quilt Nora was working on alone when I saw her tells us much about Blue Ridge fancy quilting. The top, a pattern fairly common in the area, had been pieced in Georgia and was sold already to a New England woman. Mrs. Glasco would do all the fancy quilting for forty dollars. The quilt colors are the modern earth tones; the pattern is small and the solid colors blend well with the pattern. Mrs. Glasco was quilting it “by the piece” and trying to plan a fancy quilting pattern for the border around the edge of the quilt. The final product would surely be an elaborate but mellow quilt that would fit into any modern bedroom decor.

Mrs. Glasco has an older Lone Star quilt pieced from old neckties by her grandmother some thirty years ago. The juxtaposition of patterns now seems jarring to her, and she talked to me about tearing the quilt top apart and adding rows of solid colors to it to give it a more contemporary appearance. Surely the values of the quilting revival have influenced both the technical skills and aesthetic sensibilities of the fancy quilters.

IV. The Process. In terms of performance, Blue Ridge quilting is, and always has been, a solitary, or at most, a family affair. Again, climate and vernacular architecture may have caused this. Rooms in private homes are relatively small and not conducive to eight or ten women moving about a rather large quilting frame. Churches in the area lack large social rooms, and thus there seems to be no suitable place for women to gather. In any event most women prefer spending two or three solitary days stitching on a quilt suspended from the ceiling of a small bedroom or living room.

I heard of only three quilting groups, all of which were relatively modern innovations. We observed two of these groups at work. One, organized by the local Homemaker's Club in North Carolina, is held in an old abandoned house. A second group of women filled the basement of the Baptist Church in Meadows of Dan, Virginia. Even this so-called quilting bee reflects the area's major thrust toward solitary quilting. The entire group gathers on the first day to put in and begin work on the quilt. Then the women come in by ones, twos, and threes each day until the quilt is finished. Crystal Cruise, the group's organizer, describes the process:

Sometimes you'll be in quilting all by yourself, and sometimes you'll have somebody with you, you know. You don't hardly ever meet all in a group. Maybe the first day, but where you're having this group quilting, you don't always have them all there.

Mrs. Cruise remains the primary force behind the church group's quilting. She pieces many of their quilt tops, and each year she and her husband quilt four or five quilts, including elaborate applique patterns which she purchases in kit form. When I visited her, she was piecing a Grandmother's Flower Garden sent to her from the state of Washington. She tried to stitch the fifteen hundred hexagons together by hand. Finally, overwhelmed by the task, she threw the bundle down in disgust, and her husband solved the mathematical puzzle after she fled the house. She asked the church ladies to quilt the top for sentimental reasons even though she knew that some would not do a good job. Occasionally she brings the quilts home and tears out the most offensive stitches. "On my own quilts," she warns, "I would not recommend group quilting."



Figure 12. Crystal Cruise piecing a Grandmother's Flower Garden while her husband, Levy, watches. Geraldine Johnson, BR8-1-20343/35A.



Figure 13. Quilting group at Meadows of Dan Baptist Church in Meadows of Dan, Virginia. Terry Eiler, BR8-15-20420/17.

Ten women gathered at the Meadows of Dan Baptist Church one Thursday morning. Four team members recorded the event on film and tape. The highly self-conscious women still managed to discuss the two major events of the week—a local woman had won the title of Miss America and the National Park Service had once again provoked the community. Family and community gossip intertwined with comments about the quilt and quilting itself. After the obligatory covered dish dinner and a visit by the minister, the group continued to quilt until four o'clock. Once a woman took me off to the side to tell an off-color joke, and the minister discussed local politics with me in some detail. The event was surely contrived, but then most Blue Ridge quilting bees are more or less.

The strong emphasis on the social dimension of quilting keeps us from looking deeper into a woman's psyche to discover other forces that drive her to the quilting frame and threaded needle. The solitude, sense of comfort, and a need for beauty are all aspects of the craft that deserve further exploration. As we delve into quilting from an art historian's or sociologist's point-of-view and search, as we must, for the item's regional boundaries, the subtle nuances in the woman's personality must not be overlooked.

V. Conclusions. Blue Ridge quilts, like quilts everywhere, are intimately tied to the region in which they are created. Basically they were used to keep warm in an area with low income, cold winters, and drafty houses. In our search for deeper social and aesthetic meanings, we cannot ignore this basic and fundamental fact. If we do we may well overlook that very interesting body of quilts tucked away in closets throughout the country—the plain quilt.

Farm wives showed tremendous ingenuity and skill in creating quilts from the remnants of their environment—the scraps, feedbags, and worn out socks that eventually reappeared in quilts. Their pieces did not match and their stitches were sometimes too large, but these quilts too reflect an aesthetic that has only begun to be explored among some black quilters. White non-Pennsylvania-German quilts also deserve attention.

Now that Appalachia has been discovered as a fashionable area of poverty and old-timey ways, fancy quilts in particular illustrate the results of government intervention, folk craft enthusiasm, and the quilting revival in general. The Blue Ridge Parkway, slashing through the region, provided a market for women who wished to sell quilts that met certain standards. Federal poverty programs, on the other hand, attempted to squash local quilting traditions and replace them with those deemed aesthetically and technically superior. Thus if the Blue Ridge experience is any example, future studies of quilts should also examine the positive and negative aspects of the quilting revival as it is manifested in regional tourism and federalism.



Figure 14. Close-up of Zenna Todd's hand next to its representation embroidered on the quilt. Geraldine Johnson, BR8-45-20544/20.

Basically, however, these quilts—both plain and fancy—illustrate for me the values I heard so often articulated in the personal narratives, jokes, and gossip these women shared with me—the value of home, family, and community. Nora Glasco expressed it verbally when she compared her seventeen years in the Hanes textile mill with work in her home and church:

When you go into a factory, so much of the time, I speak for a lot of people, I think, when I say this, you feel like that you just go in and your life is just revolved around a machine. When you're home doing your housework, doing things for the neighbors, working with your church, working with craft groups and things, you feel like you have a broader view of life and you feel like your life is more wholesome and worthwhile. You don't make any money, but you sure do enjoy yourself a lot more. Factory work is fine for those that enjoy it; I did not enjoy it, only for the people.

Zenna Todd's crazy quilt illustrates those same values in material form. Pieced from her children's old clothing, the quilt contains, in embroidery, the family's secrets and jokes. Sewing materials, an old phonograph, a pet duck, and even Mrs. Todd's own hand, complete with the nail polish her children tease her about, are all recorded in this document. Fancy or plain—directly or indirectly—the Blue Ridge quilt is both a protector and documentor of family life.

We folklorists, then, who are particularly interested in the values and creative activity of women need to discover what women are really saying and doing. We need to investigate regional styles in quilting as well as other types of handwork. We need to investigate socioeconomic factors as they relate both to the item and to the process. Finally we need to document the entire range of materials created by women in their domestic careers. "Now do you reckon that they will enjoy seeing quilts like this?" Mamie Bryan asked. The answer should be yes.

NOTES

1. For discussions of the Bride's Quilt and other related popular belief, see among others: Mary Washington Clarke, *Kentucky Quilts and Their Makers* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1976), p. 6; Florence Peto, *American Quilts and Coverlets* (New York: Chanticleer Press, 1949), p. 19.

2. Several quilting bibliographies have now been published. See Simon J. Bronner, *Bibliography of American Folk and Vernacular Art* (Bloomington, Indiana: Folklore Publications Group, 1980); Susan Roach and Lorre M. Weidlich, "Quilt Making in America: A Selected Bibliography," *Folklore Feminists Communication*, 3 (1974), 17-28. Many contemporary studies listed in the above bibliographies focus primarily on the quilt top as a work of art. See, for example, Jonathan Holstein, *American Pieced Quilts* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1972) and *The Pieced Quilt: An American Design Tradition* (Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphic Society, Ltd., 1973); Lenice Ingram Bacon, *American Patchwork Quilts* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1973); Effie Chalmers Pforr, *Progressive Farmer Award Winning Quilts* (Birmingham, Alabama, 1974). Susan Stewart explores the social and religious dimensions of quilting in "Sociological Aspects of Quilting in Three Brethren Churches in Southeastern Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania Folklife*, 23 (1974), 15-29. Finally, for comments on black quilting traditions, see John Michael Vlach, "Quilting" in *The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts* (Cleveland, Ohio: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1978), pp. 44-75.

3. Two contemporary works attempt to place the quilts within the context of the quiltmakers' lives; see Clarke, and Patricia Cooper and Norma Bradley Buferd, *The Quilters: Women and Domestic Art* (Garden City, New York, 1978). Some older works captured the spirit of the quilter as well; see, for example, Ruth E. Finley, *Old Patchwork Quilts and the Women Who Made Them* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1929). For the best discussion of the history of the quilt, see Patsy and Myron Orlofsky, *Quilts in America* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974).

4. Peter T. Bartis, *Preliminary Research Survey for the Blue Ridge Folklife Project* (Washington, D.C.: American Folklife Center, 1978), p. 20.

5. No one considers the quilt to be a "painting" more than Jonathan Holstein. See *American Pieced Quilts*, p. 7; *The Pieced Quilt*, p. 8. Holstein's assumptions about the quilter's vision of her own work seem naive, and more discussion with women who quilt might help him modify some of his remarks. Unfortunately Vlach suggests that Holstein's quilt collection is the Euro-American norm to which he compares Afro-American quilts, p. 44. Several other books serve as excellent guides to quilt top patterns and names; see Carrie A. Hall and Rose G. Kretsinger, *The Romance of the Patchwork Quilt in America* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1938); Margaret Ickis, *The Standard Book of Quilt Making and Collecting* (New York: Greystone Press, 1949; rpt. New York: Dover Publications, 1959); Carleton L. Safford and Robert Bishop, *America's Quilts and Coverlets* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1972).

6. For a short list of quilting newsletters, see Roach and Weidlich. Observations made in this paper are based on my examination of issues of *Quilter's Newsletter Magazine*, 6700 West 44th Avenue, Wheatridge, Colorado, 80033.

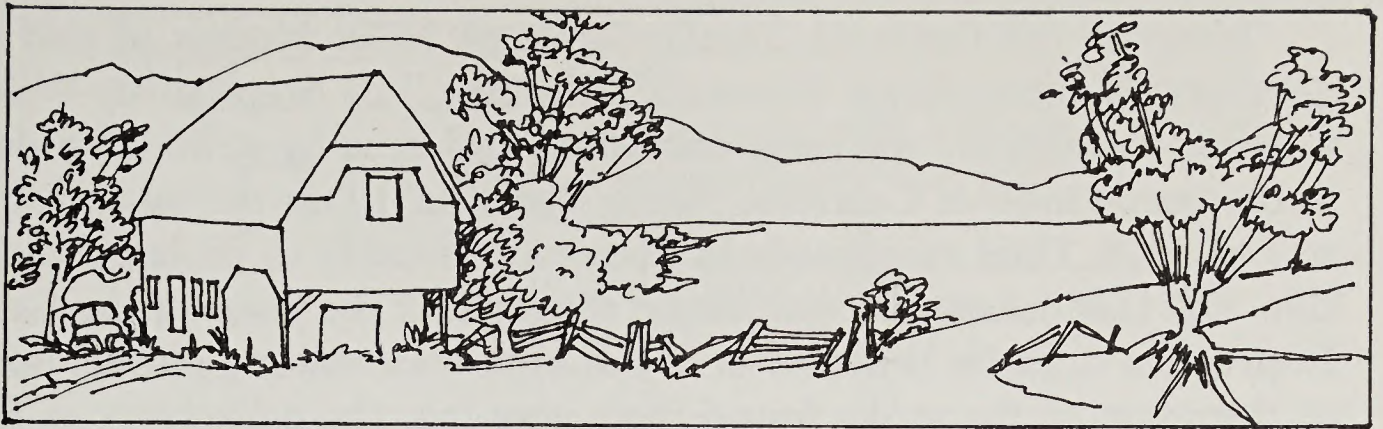
7. The "sea wave" is also referred to as the "fan" and is "by no means exclusive to Wales" according to Averil Colby in *Quilting* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), p. 50. Colby states that the pattern was generally used in borders, but Mavis Fitzrandolph in *Traditional Quilting: Its Story and Its Practice* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1954) includes a photo of a quilt with an over-all "sea wave" pattern which looks very much like a fan. Joyce Joines Newman in *North Carolina Country Quilts* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The Ackland Art Museum, 1978) finds that fan quilting predominates in the more "unsophisticated" quilts of the Scots-Irish in one of three North Carolina regions. For further discussions of fan quilting, see Josephine Lombardo, "Folk Crafts," in *Introduction to Folklore*, ed. Robert J. Adams (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University, 1973), pp. 90-9.

8. Vlach, p. 44.

9. Vlach, p. 73.

10. Vlach, p. 67.

11. Michael Owen Jones discusses the problems of investigating the "folk aesthetic" in "The Concept of 'Aesthetic' in the Traditional Arts," *Western Folklore*, 30 (April 1971), 77-104, and *The Hand Made Object and Its Maker* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), pp. 229-35.



The 1982 Student Contest Awards

by Cratis D. Williams

The prize-winning student essays in folklore for 1982, both stimulating reading about North Carolina subjects of interest alike to the lay reader and the scholar, are carefully written, mature, and controlled efforts that would be a credit to a seasoned researcher. Each of the essays possesses a refreshing vitality that commands immediate attention and holds the interest of the reader throughout without beclouding the subject with a display of resounding jargon, with which, we are pleased to note, these budding folklorists have not yet become obsessed.

Mary Anne McDonald's "White Rock Village: Folk Art on Route 86?" is a straightforward and intriguing report of her study of a stone village, which Henry Warren, untrained in architecture, masonry, carpentry, and art, spent nine years after his retirement in 1968 in building. Mr. Warren's objective seems to have been simply that of expressing himself in the media that lay close at hand. He built Shangri La, his name for the village, as a summing up in a white stone model of what North Carolina villages in the Piedmont meant to him. What might have been memoirs for a retired professor, novelist, playwright, or artist in nearby Chapel Hill was for Henry Warren of Yanceyville a complex piece of remarkable folk art uttered in white stone.

Cratis Williams, chancellor emeritus of Appalachian State University and long-time loyal member of the North Carolina Folklore Society, served as judge of the Society's 1982 student essay contest. Professor Williams has published extensively about Mountain narrative, speech, and song, and is himself a tradition bearer of Kentucky tales and ballads.

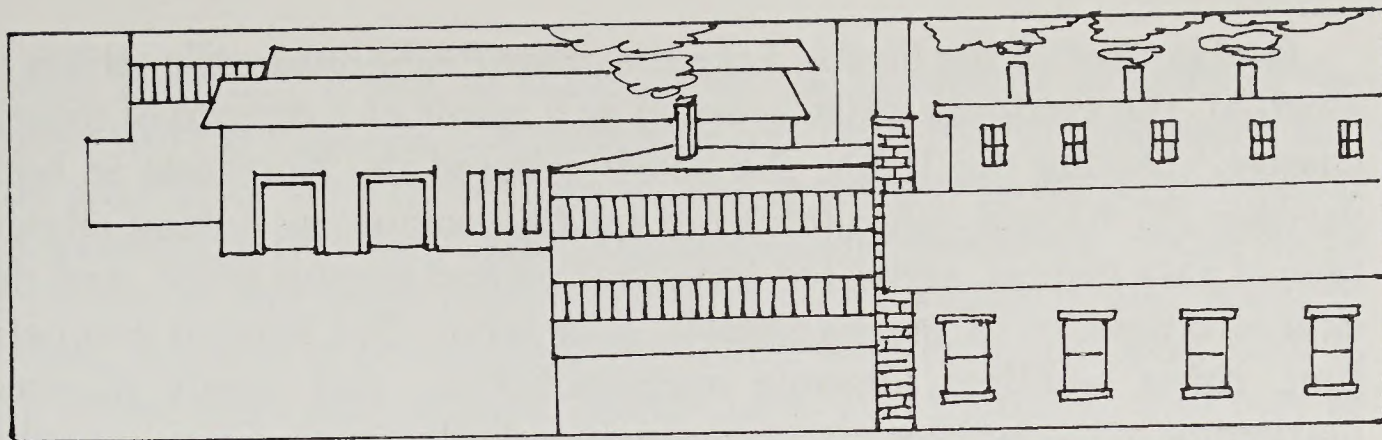
"Songs of the Gastonia Textile Strike of 1929: Models of and for Southern Working-Class Women's Militancy," by Stephen R. Wiley, analyzes insightfully the songs composed and sung by striking workers in the textile mills of Gastonia, North Carolina, in the spring and summer of 1929. Used extensively in literature, notably in proletarian fiction, the Gastonia strikes continued throughout the years of the Great Depression to excite the interest of the American reading public. Some of the songs of the strike found their way into the collections of folk songs, including the great Frank C. Brown Collection, where they invite comparison with their models.

Mr. Wiley has cited the model for each of the strike songs and examines each as a personal expression of its composer. These songs became a vehicle for reassuring the unfortunate millhands, especially exploited women workers like Ella May, of the righteousness of their cause and the promise of relief from suffering in joining a union.

The essay illustrates vividly the functional aspects of an organic singing tradition among the folk of the Southern Highlands. Many of the models for the strike songs, themselves indigenous to the region but almost always rural, were enjoying at the time a renewed vigor on records for manually cranked phonographs. Everybody knew "Old Smoky," "May I Sleep in Your Barn Tonight, Mister?," "The Wreck of the Old 97," "Little Mary Phagan," and "Floyd Collins."

As had been the custom among ballad-makers for centuries, the composers of the strike songs borrowed not only the tunes but syntactical and structural devices as well from their models. Surprisingly, though, those processes of tradition and innovation in ballad-making that we have come to associate with remote and often isolated rural settings continued as effectively in an industrial and urban setting in which the folk were charged emotionally and ethically with a common cause.

These splendid papers not only merit the Cratis D. Williams and W. Amos Abrams Prizes in North Carolina folklore but fully deserve publication in the *North Carolina Folklore Journal* as well. I am pleased to congratulate Miss McDonald and Mr. Wiley on their significant achievements.



Cratis D. Williams Prize

**Songs of the Gastonia Textile
Strike of 1929:
Models of and for Southern
Working-Class Women's Militancy**

by Stephen R. Wiley

The songs composed and performed by the striking textile millhands in Gastonia, North Carolina, between April and September 1929 not only increase our knowledge of events and issues the strikers took to be important; when reconstructed in their referential richness and performative intensity, these strike songs also reveal processes that underlay discrete events and structured the course of the whole strike. Three observations can be made about them. First, the songs are a set of reactions to events in the strike and a set of expressions of the reasons for striking. Second, the lyrics of the strike songs reveal a radically altered ethic when compared to the lyrics of the traditional songs which were their models. Third—and this is the most important point—the songs and the singing of them were not merely ornamental or secondary: they were primary and essential in the structuring of the strike. The songs are, at their deepest, of, by, and about women resisting the injustices of capitalistic male-dominance in their work system.

Stephen Wiley is a doctoral candidate in the American Studies Program at the University of Minnesota. He read an earlier version of this essay at the 1982 meeting of the American Folklore Society.

Background of the Strike. Like the other Piedmont textile strikes of 1929-30, the Gastonia strike erupted as a result of a decade of drastic change.¹ During the 1920s, the South eclipsed the Northeast in both yardage (67%) and value (56%) of textile production, taking advantage of easy capital, restricted immigration and surplus labor, and the capital efficiency of mechanization over labor. But foreign competition, rising hemlines, chronic overproduction, and poorly planned marketing made textiles an increasingly risky business. Cumulatively, labor costs rose more slowly than physical productivity, but value productivity lagged behind relative real earnings. In this economic paradox, businessmen were more aware of the first set of indices. As a result, individual Southern firms went bankrupt in record numbers by the late 1920s, but the typical management response was to increase production and cut labor costs. These efficiencies were achieved in four ways. Night work was increased because the women and children used were cheaper than men. In "stretchouts," the variety of tasks for which a worker was responsible was reduced, but the number of machines for which she was responsible increased as much as fourfold. In addition, many factories actually sped up their machines. Finally, wage cuts came in stages. By 1929, the workforce at the huge Loray Mill in Gastonia had been cut from 3,500 to 2,200, and wages had been cut 10% twice in succession, with additional selective cuts of up to 50%. In the first year, 1927-28, these measures saved the parent corporation, Manville-Jenckes of Rhode Island, \$500,000. Jenckes wrote a letter of congratulation to the Loray superintendent and encouraged him to do more of the same. Hands were in dire straits, making from \$9 to \$12 for a 60-hour week. This average wage of 15¢ to 20¢ per hour was about half the 1928 national average of 33.7¢ per hour. And spare hands—those who worked occasionally at the behest of the superintendent when regular hands were absent or "asked out"—made half the wages of a regular hand. These developments, particular manifestations of trends epidemic throughout Southern textiles, laid the groundwork for the strike.

The first phase of the Gastonia strike began when both shifts of the Loray plant walked out on 1 April, 1929.² Led by the charismatic Fred Beal, a New England textile worker turned Communist organizer for the infant National Textile Workers Union (NTWU), the strikers crippled the mill for at least two weeks and harrassed its management for several months. As the ideology of class warfare and the typical Southern millworkers' pattern of spontaneous protest melded into a more personal identification between the organizers and the strikers, several dynamics developed. The mill and its many allies mounted an ideological and armed offensive against the strikers. Hard-pressed to survive, some strikers and sympathizers withdrew their support and

“went back in.” A few of these joined the mounting violence of the police and the vigilante Committee of 100. In mid-April, the union hall and relief store were razed. Meanwhile, the schism in the working class between supporters and opponents of the strike deepened, taking shape in terms of not only material interests and religious and political beliefs, but also in terms of gender. Those who remained most loyal to the strike were mill women, particularly mill mothers, who rose to native leadership. A 7 June raid on the strikers’ tent colony (many had been evicted from their company-owned houses) by Police Chief Aderholt and two drunken deputies led to the death of Aderholt in an exchange of gunfire. Enraged mobs destroyed the tent colony, and all Northerners and “Communists” associated with the strike were imprisoned on charges of conspiracy and first-degree murder. These events ended phase one and inaugurated phase two.

Strike leadership became increasingly local and female in the quickly re-established tent colony. While picket-line skirmishes continued, the strikers and the mill faction put most of their energy into preparing for the conspiracy-murder trial. Support for the strike was widespread: an NTWU conference in late July in nearby Bessemer City drew representatives from fifty-three mills in twenty-nine Gaston County towns. Meanwhile in mid-August, a state law was passed that reduced hours without reducing pay for millworkers. The trial, which began in late August after a change of venue from Gastonia to Charlotte, failed to produce any evidence of conspiracy or murder. For a while, the Communist Party’s International Labor Defense (ILD) became, to the strikers, a means of achieving deliverance and justice nearly as powerful as the union itself. The trial ended in a mistrial when a juror went insane after the prosecution had wheeled in a life-sized effigy of Chief Aderholt in his blood-stained clothes. Anti-NTWU violence raged over a three-county area for three days. Only five days after the declaration of mistrial, as many as 2,000 vigilantes closed off the roads into South Gastonia, sabotaging a planned union rally. Some of them ran a truckload of strikers off the road. In it rode Ella May, a songster who had become the local leader of the strike. She was killed by gunfire from fifteen feet away. Thus ended phase two and, with it, the strike proper.

The union formally ceased activity on 20 September, six days after Ella May’s murder. With the blood debt for Aderholt paid, armed violence against the strikers could also end. The defendants of the Aderholt murder charge were convicted of second-degree murder in a second trial. They jumped bail, and some, including Beal, got as far as the Soviet Union. Ella May’s murderer, though identified by over fifty witnesses, was not convicted.

The Strike Songs. Looking at the songs alongside the strike shows that their composers responded to events and expressed underlying issues for the strikers. The events that the songs chronicled were the 1 April walkout, the razing of the union hall, the evictions, the events surrounding 7 June, the imprisonment of the outside strike leaders, the change of venue from Gastonia to Charlotte, and Ella May's murder. The song texts deal with only a few reasons for striking, repeated over and over: the need to oppose the mill's cruelty, dishonesty, and indifference toward the workers; the hope of deliverance from the evils of millhand life; the hope for a better life via the NTWU and, later, the ILD; and, in a couple of songs, the intolerable hardship of life as a woman millhand. The issues raised in performance were more complex, and their full scope cannot be guessed from the texts; the difference between simple text and song will become clearer as this article progresses.

That the strikers composed more songs than the twelve that have survived in print is certain. All the extant texts are parodies, easier to make up than original songs. Also, eyewitnesses refer to several singers and to new songs being a regular feature of the daily union meetings.³ Finally, although journalists, who collected most of the songs, had limited access to Gastonia after the events of 7 June,⁴ most of the songs in print are from the second phase. It is unlikely, however, that the songs that have been lost would differ significantly from those that we have.

The strike songs of Odell Corley, Daisy McDonald, and Ella May reveal an ethic radically different from that of their traditional models. These women strikers used cognitive, narrative, syntactical, and melodic conventions from secular folksong tradition as models of one or more aspects of their common situation, but they then went beyond the typical powerlessness of the isolated protagonist of tradition by presenting solidarity within the union as the means of righting the wrongs done to them. This pattern of transformation was established in phase one and persisted throughout the strike. Each singer reshaped her traditional resources differently as shown by the songs of Odell Corley and Daisy McDonald.

Odell Corley was an eleven-year-old spare hand. She suffered the injustices of mill life doubly, by receiving half the pay of a regular hand and by being subjected to harsh working and living conditions as a child. Her song "Up in Old Loray" reveals a militant feminist consciousness at an early age. The model Odell used was "Old Smoky," a lover's lament whose title indicates associations with rural North Carolina. Collected versions contemporaneous with Odell's song begin with a group of verses (usually five) about the pain of love betrayed and the perfidy of the "false-hearted lover."⁵ Odell's song uses the

themes of betrayal and death in these traditional verses and the feelings of sadness, anger, and frustration common to both the persona of tradition and the mill woman. The false-hearted lover becomes the boss, and he betrays not love but something perhaps more essential—the hope of livelihood—by systematically falsifying the woman worker's ledger. With the resulting underpayment and overwork, Odell and her fellow workers are “covered with lint,” and their shoulders become “crippled and bent.” In her last verse, Odell implies that mill work is a slow death. The main formal difference between her song and its model is that hers has a chorus, which changes the powerless victim of tradition into an autonomous individual calling on her sister-workers to withdraw from a system that daily betrays and finally kills them. In her song “May I Sleep in Your Tent Tonight, Beal?,” Odell transforms the betrayal, uprootedness, and desperation of the protagonist in “May I Sleep in Your Barn Tonight, Mister?”⁶ into anger at the mill and its scabs, and she expresses the general expectation that Fred Beal will help the strikers. In all of her songs, the bosses' greed, deceit, and inhumanity cause the workers' suffering, and the union is or can be the means to overcome them. Odell's songs become more graphic, more personalized, and angrier as the strike goes on. This tendency gives them greater tactical usefulness in the incidents of the strike, but reduces their capacity to explore deeper structural issues.

By contrast, both of Daisy McDonald's songs blend issues and events; she tries to say why the strikers are striking as she recounts events and calls for continued resolve against uneven odds. For both “The Speakers Didn't Mind” and “On a Summer Eve,” the model was “The Wreck of the Old 97,” a song based on the 1903 wreck of a fast mail train that ran between Washington and Atlanta.⁷ In it, the brave and duty conscious engineer tempts fate and loses, and in three of the six North Carolina versions, the last verse suggests that the hero threw himself into his work because his wife had spoken “harsh words” to him. The differences between model and parodies are instructive. In “The Speakers Didn't Mind,” the NTWU leaders spoke despite mill harrassment, were shot at, and jailed, and the tent colonists were routed and brutalized. But the strike leaders are not dead, and there is cause for hope and continued militancy both in the release of some of them and in the rapid re-establishment of the tent colony. If the strikers are faithful to their cause, as the engineer's wife was not to him, they can win their objectives: “more money and better homes/And...much better lives.”

The formula of victory through solidarity in adversity is also evident in “On a Summer Eve,” but it is unsuccessful here. This song uses the murder of Ella May as yet another setback and her courage as a model of dedication in the strike, just as other strike songs used strike events.

But Ella's murder was an act of vengeance that undid the strikers' resolve beyond recall. "On a Summer Eve," the only song from phase three, came as a last desperate attempt to transmute powerlessness into power. Its last lines mention "the dirty cell/In the Gastonia jail we all know well," where the organizers await the second trial and which the strikers had become familiar with in the aftermath of braving the picket line. But these words could just as easily mean the Loray Mill itself, which the hands had called "jail" for years,⁸ and which, if they were lucky enough to escape blacklisting, they could go back into for the life of insupportably hard work and indignity they had striven so courageously to transform.

The songs of Ella May contribute to her own role in the strike and to the development of events in the strike. Her songs express the same activist ethic that animates those of Odell Corley and Daisy McDonald. They call for continued solidarity with fellow-workers and with the NTWU against the injustice and violence of the mill and its allies. But a survey of some of her songs and a reconstruction of her performance of "Mill Mother's Lament" show that Ella May was a more powerful singer than the other two women and that it was this power that made her a primary figure in the strike.

All of Ella's songs except "Mill Mother's Lament" were composed in phase two of the strike. The brother and sister in "Two Little Strikers" have been orphaned by the raids on the tent colony after the death of Aderholt. In the model, "Two Little Children," the orphaned siblings fall asleep outside the church door and freeze to death overnight, but go to heaven in rather syrupy glory.⁹ In Ella's song, the children tell the singer about their mother's imprisonment and their father's wounding and disappearance. Uncharacteristically, no solution is offered; whether this lack is due to Ella's intent or to lost verses is hard to say. In either case, the rendering of family disruption is forceful. Ella's "Chief Aderholt," like most of the other strike songs, describes a problem and offers a solution. In its model, "Floyd Collins," a youth goes against his parents' wishes and his own premonitory dream and explores a cave, where he is trapped and, despite the efforts of friends and neighbors, dies.¹⁰ In Ella's song, it is Aderholt who is doomed because, like young Collins, he goes against his own better judgment. But then the imprisoned organizers become the object of the song, and the rescue efforts of the model become solidarity with the union which may secure their release. "All Around the Jailhouse" is unique among the strikers' songs because it is the singer's song about herself and affords an insight into Ella May's dedication to the strike. In the model, "All Around the Watertank, Waiting for a Train," a hobo complains about rain and the heavy-handed greed of railroad guards and expresses his hope that a train will come by and carry him home to Dixie.¹¹ Ella May, by con-

trast, is at the mercy of nothing and no one: not stranded 1,000 miles from home, but released "one mile from the union hall"; not unemployed, but wanted in the strike; not distressed because she is broke, but glad because she expects to take part in renewed militancy.¹²

Ella May's best-loved and most called-for song, and the one in which she deals most fully with the tensions of her life as a mill mother and a striker, is "Mill Mother's Lament." This is a structural, rather than a situational, protest song¹³: it expresses a deep existential dilemma in the identity of mill mothers as individuals and as a class, rather than recounting names and events whose impact lies partly in an immediacy that will soon fade. Ella May is standing before a group of striking families in the tent colony, mostly women and children.¹⁴ They know her life story and identify with her: early years spent on a poor farm in the Great Smokies; attractive, a popular singer, married at 17, the first of nine children born the following year; husband crippled in an industrial accident; she moves to the mills to support her family; husband unemployable, becomes an alcoholic and abandons her and the children. She had gone into a mill in Bessemer City, where, she said:

I never made no more than nine dollars a week, and you can't do for a family on such money....I'm the mother of nine. Four of them died with whooping cough, all at once. I was working nights and nobody to do for them, only Myrtle. She's eleven and a sight of help. I asked the super to put me on the day shift so's I could tend 'em when they had their bad spells, but he wouldn't. I don't know why. He's the sorriest man alive, I reckon. So I had to quit my job, and then there wasn't any money for medicine, and they just died. I never could do for my children, not even to keep 'em alive, it seems. That's why I come out for the union, so's I can do better for them.

Ella May's experience was not unique. When, in verse one of "Mill Mother's Lament," she sings, "We leave our homes in the morning," she underlines the shared oppression and disruption of mill families and highlights how these phenomena were women's issues. The mill mother's dilemma is that although she must "slave" in the mill for money to feed and clothe her children, doing so makes it impossible for her to be with them and care for them.

One crucial feature of the structural depression of the textile workforce in the 1920s was, in fact, a significant increase in the proportion of women and children in the mills.¹⁵ Mill mothers were 20 to 50% of the Piedmont textile workforce. While there are no estimates for the percentage of children or for the Loray Mill in particular, the management efficiencies of 1927-28 argue for relatively high proportions of women and children, especially if spare hands are included. Observers were unanimous in reporting malnutrition and chronic fatigue and illness among mill families. The mill mother on the day

shift prepared breakfast and lunch, arranged for childcare, and tidied up house before she left for work at a few minutes to 6 A.M.; when she got home twelve hours later, exhausted, she had to make supper and tend home and children before she could go to sleep. In 1926 (*before* the management efficiencies that sparked the strikes), 54% of all time lost by mill women was due to housework, personal or family illness, and pregnancy and childbirth. While the mill mother was at work, littler brothers and sisters were in the care of older siblings. More tenuous arrangements were made if these older children had to work as spare hands. Ella May had wanted to work days but had been refused this lesser of two evils. She and her audience knew what the line, "Our children scream and cry," meant.

This song transforms the mill mother's crippling guilt about the inadequacy of her parenting into a liberating sense of personal worth and dignity that will not cooperate with the evil system that oppresses her and her children. This process works at two connected levels. Ella details the dilemma of verse one in the three middle verses: after the groceries are bought, there is no money left for clothes and "not a cent to lay away." The children feel their need keenly, but their mother is unable to meet it. As Ella says, "How it grieves the heart of a mother...."

At a less conscious level, many in the audience would have heard the song in connection with its models, the song "Little Mary Phagan" and the 1913 events on which it was based.¹⁶ The child, a worker in an Atlanta pencil factory, was murdered by her boss, Leo Frank, when she went to get her pay. Amid widespread public outrage, Frank was tried and convicted. Most North Carolina versions of "Little Mary Phagan" focus on the pitiable child, the inhuman boss, and the satisfaction of judgment, earthly and divine. In "Mill Mother's Lament," the death in life of the children—and, in Ella's experience, the real death of four of her own—is as much the boss's responsibility as Mary Phagan's was Leo Frank's. Also, since the mill mother, in Ella's song, goes to the factory, the boss and the mill system become responsible for her spiritual dying as well. But in the context of its models, "Mill Mother's Lament" makes two additional statements. Just as Mary Phagan's mother sent the child, albeit unknowingly, to her death, so the mill mother in Ella's song shares responsibility for her children's want, because she participates in the mill system. Given that most of the strikers were between 18 and 35 and that Ella was 13 in 1913,¹⁷ her song creates a dual perspective on the mill mother's dilemma by both using the perspective of the mill mother and reawakening the girlhood identification of the women in her audience with Mary Phagan. Thus do singer and audience become victimized and victimizer, and Mary Phagan's death and the need of the mill mother and her children a type

of suicide. Verse five exposes the vulnerability of the mill system: the boss gets at the children through the mother. Clearly, the only ethical thing to do is to withdraw and resist. In the models, justice is in the hands, not of Mary's mother, but of the judge; but in "Mill Mother's Lament," as in the other Gastonia strike songs, justice is a real choice for the mill mother. Ella's song concludes with a call to action: "Let's stand together, workers,/And have a union here." In six short verses, Ella has taken the confusion, guilt, fear, and despair she shares with all mill mothers and transformed them, for herself and her audience, into righteousness, hope, and courage.

The significance of "Mill Mother's Lament" and of the other Gastonia strikers' songs lies not only in their responsiveness to events, their expression of agreed-upon issues, or their transformation of powerlessness into power. It lies most basically in the extent, epitomized by "Mill Mother's Lament," to which the singers in their participation in the strike through their art, made the raw experience of socioeconomic and gender exploitation over into a shared justification for withdrawal from an evil system and organized resistance to it. Their singing was both a public articulation and a strengthening of the resolve beneath their actions. But just as textual and ethical changes from model to parody were not the only deep structural transformation at work in the strike, so the strikers were not the only faction in it. Both sides drew on certain Southern Protestant religious beliefs to form reasons for their choices. Essentially, the strikers' heterodoxy inverted the mill faction's orthodoxy. Standard beliefs held fate beyond individual control, this world necessarily imperfect, and ultimate justice necessarily otherworldly. What the strikers did was to assume individual and collective responsibility for improving their lot and working for social justice.¹⁸ Moreover, religious language and feeling suffused the strike, especially the tent colony, whose purpose—to affirm membership in a system of belief which, once enacted, would end domination and bring about liberation—was the same as that of the traditional camp meetings held each summer throughout the South. The strikers called their tent colony "New Town," and it represented Utopia to them. But the mill faction, from owner to scab, shared the convictions that the textile industry was an unmixed blessing, that workers had no cause for complaint, and that strikers who did not confess and repent of their wrongdoing were agents of Satan, who, through the NTWU and outside organizers, was intent upon spreading race mixing, bloodshed, and anarchy in his attempts to destroy Christian civilization.¹⁹ The Committee of 100 was, then, an unfortunate but wholly justifiable means of restoring the ordained order. There was nothing odd in seeing Aderholt's death as both a victory for Satan and the first death in a feud which demanded revenge. Nor was there

anything odd in seeing Ella May as the most powerful agent of Satan, especially after Aderholt's death, or even, if widespread beliefs about women who lived alone on the outskirts of town and had their own wells came into play, as a witch. Reports that the Committee of 100 had singled her out for death come as no surprise. Ella May went to the mass rally on 14 September armed only with dedication to a just cause; her murderers came to settle the score in the feud by killing their enemies' leader. For the mill faction, Ella May's death did settle the score, and things could and did get back to normal. For the strikers, Ella May's death confirmed the brutality of their oppressors and, in the manner of that confirmation, unsinewed their resolve. As the fall of 1929 wore on, the striking mill mothers and their children went back to mill life, their singing resistance and hope for a better life a memory.

NOTES

1. Fred Beal, *Proletarian Journey: New England, Gastonia, Moscow* (New York: Hillman-Curl, Inc., 1937), pp. 134, 138, 143-44; Irving Bernstein, *The Lean Years: A History of the American Worker, 1920-1933* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1960), pp. 2-4, 53-54; Ethel Best, *Lost Time and Labor Turnover in Cotton Mills: A Study in Cause and Extent*, US Women's Bureau, Bulletin No. 52 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1926), pp. 8-10, 20-25, 32-36, 41-52, 67-72, 83-88, 117; Paul Blanshard, *Labor in Southern Cotton Mills* (New York: New Republic, Inc., 1927), pp. 3-8, 18, 47-53; Harry Boyte, "The Textile Industry: Keel of Southern Industrialization," *Radical America*, 6:2 (March-April 1972), 4-20, 29-30; Paul Douglas, *Real Wages in the United States, 1890-1926* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1930), pp. 524-48; William (Bill) Dunne, *Gastonia: Citadel of Class Struggle in the New South* (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1929), pp. 17, 19-21, 36-37, 49-50; Matilda Lindsay, "Southern Women in Industry," *American Federationist*, 36:8 (August, 1929), 973-75; (Dorothy) Myra Page, *Southern Cotton Mills and Labor* (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1929), pp. 21, 24-25, 59-68; Florence Peterson, *Strikes in the United States, 1880-1936* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1938), pp. 35-54, 58-81, 90-94, 111, 117, 122-24, 137-39; Liston Pope, *Millhands and Preachers: A Study of Gastonia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942), pp. 222-28, 230-36; Tom Tippet, *When Southern Labor Stirs* (New York: Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith, 1931), pp. 23-28, 30-32, 56-57, 87, 111; U.S. Senate, 71st Congress, 1st Session, Committee on Manufactures, *Hearings on Senate Resolution 49: Working Conditions of the Textile Industry in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1929), pp. 2-6, 24-27, 47-51, 54-56, 59-60, 62, 64, 85-86, 141-43; Vera Buch Weisbord, *A Radical Life* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1977), pp. 176-80, 184-85, 195-96, 201, 205, 216-17.

2. Among the best narratives of the strike are Tom Tippet's chapter in *When Southern Labor Stirs*, pp. 76-108, and, more recently, Theodore Draper, "Gastonia Revisited," *Social Research*, 38:1 (Spring 1971), 3-29. Also of value is Samuel Yellen's chapter in *American Labor Struggles* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1936), pp. 303-316.

Eyewitness accounts are afforded by the disarmingly straightforward Fred Beal in his autobiography, *Proletarian Journey*, pp. 109-210 ff., and by Vera Buch Weisbord in her autobiography, *A Radical Life*, pp. 171-289. Detail and a sense of immediacy can be had from occasional pieces in *The Nation* and heavy coverage in *Labor Defender*, organ of the CPUSA's International Labor Defense, from April 1929 on. The deservedly revered classic monograph on Gastonia is Liston Pope's *Millhands and Preachers*. More recently, Irving Bernstein's "Prologue" to *The Lean Years* introduces labor in that era by narrating the major Piedmont textile strikes of 1929-30, including Gastonia, as a group.

3. Beal, p. 159; Page, pp. 21-22.

4. Pope, p. 273. The *Labor Defender* also played up the cordoning off of Gastonia.

5. Harry M. Belden and Arthur P. Hudson, eds., *Folk Songs from North Carolina*, III, *The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore*, ed. Newman I. White (Durham: Duke University Press, 1952-64), 287-90; Mellinger E. Henry, *Folk-Songs from the Southern Highlands* (New York: J.J. Augustin, Publisher, 1938), pp. 273-75, and *Songs Sung in the Southern Appalachians, Many of Them Illustrating Ballads in the Making* (London: The Mitre Press, n.d.), pp. 2-3; E.C. Perrow, "Songs and Rhymes from the South," *Journal of American Folklore*, 28:108 (April-June 1915), 159; Dorothy Scarborough, *A Song Catcher in the Southern Mountains: American Folk Songs of British Ancestry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), pp. 276-77.

6. Belden and Hudson, *Folk Songs*, 420-23.

7. Henry M. Belden and Arthur P. Hudson, eds., *Folk Ballads from North Carolina*, II, *The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore*, ed. Newman I. White, 512-21; Henry, *Songs in the Appalachians*, pp. 79-80.

8. Beal, p. 135.

9. Belden and Hudson, *Folk Ballads*, 394-95; Henry, *Songs in the Appalachians*, pp. 126-27.

10. Belden and Hudson, *Folk Ballads*, 498-501.

11. Belden and Hudson, *Folk Songs*, 428-29.

12. Vera Buch Weisbord, in *A Radical Life*, p. 185, comments on Ella May's "unusual intelligence" and ability to grasp and articulate the dynamics of a situation as it was developing.

13. R. Serge Denisoff, in *Sing a Song of Social Significance* (Bowling Green, Ky.: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1972), pp. 6-7, uses the terms "universal" and "specific" in an analogous way.

14. Beal, p. 159; Margaret Larkin, "Ella May's Songs," *The Nation*, 129: 3353 (9 October 1929), 382-83, and "The Story of Ella May," *New Masses*, 5:6 (November 1929), 3-4; Weisbord, p. 185. Ella May's words are reconstructed from the two variants reported by Larkin.

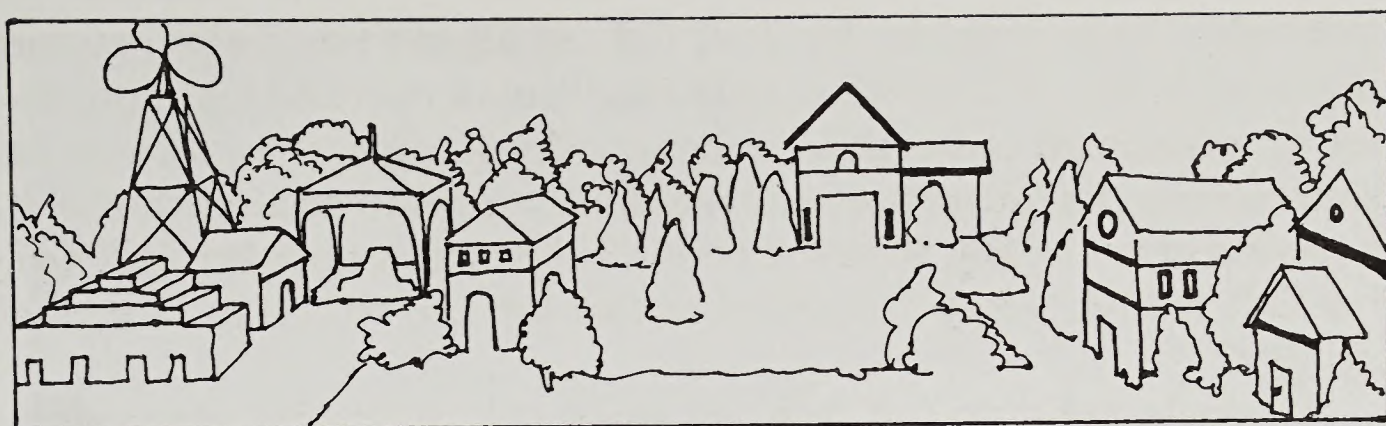
15. Bernstein, pp. 58-66; Best, pp. 9-10, 22-24, 32-36, 41-52, 67-72; Blanshard, pp. 8-15, 18-19, 21, 54-59; Lois Macdonald, *Southern Mill Hills: A Study of Social and Economic Forces in Certain Mill Villages* (New York: Alex L. Hillman, 1928), pp. 16-18, 26-38, 146-51; National Child Labor Committee, *Child Labor Laws and Child Labor Facts: An Analysis by States* (New York: National Child Labor Committee, n.d. [c. 1929]), n.p., but see entries for Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia; Boris Stern, "Mechanical Changes in the Cotton-Textile Industry, 1910-1936," *Monthly Labor Review*, 45:2 (August 1937), 318, 327-41; Tippet, pp. 31-32.

16. Belden and Hudson, *Folk Ballads*, 598-603; Isabel Gordon Carter, "Some Songs and Ballads from Tennessee and North Carolina," *Journal of American Folklore*, 46:179 (January-March 1933), 39-40; Henry, *Folk Songs from the Highlands*, pp. 336-37; Franklyn Bliss Snyder, "Leo Frank and Mary Phagan," *Journal of American Folklore*, 31: 120 (April-June 1918), 264-66.

17. Pope, p. 258.

18. Beal, pp. 124-25, 158-59; 180-81; Samuel S. Hill, Jr., *Southern Churches in Crisis* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), pp. 13, 62, 150-52, 172; Page, p. 41; Pope, pp. 78, 85-86, 90, 135-36, 249-50.

19. Paul G. Brewster, et. al., eds., *Games and Rhymes, Beliefs and Customs, Riddles, Proverbs, Speech, Tales, and Legends*, I, The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore, ed. Newman I. White, 643-68; Wayland D. Hand, ed., *Popular Beliefs and Superstitions from North Carolina*, VI and VII, The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore, ed. White, vol. 6, 599-600, vol. 7, 571; Larkin, p. 4; J.A. MacCulloch, *The Religion of the Ancient Celts* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1911), pp. 192-93, 197; Pope, pp. 114-15, 118-22, 162-64, 251, 267, 272, 303; Lowry C. Wimberly, *Folklore in the English and Scottish Ballads* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1928), p. 317; Yellen, *American Labor Struggles*, p. 316.



W. Amos Abrams Prize White Rock Village: Folk Art on Route 86?

by Mary Anne McDonald

North of Chapel Hill on State Route 86, just before Yanceyville, is what looks like a group of small, white, stone doghouses on the side of the road.* Often one or two cars stop here, and people wander about looking at the houses and taking pictures. About twenty structures form White Rock Village. Most are labeled to show their role: town hall, bar, Health, Education and Welfare Building, jail, mill, school, A.B.C. store, and even a Watergate. The structures stand from two to five feet high and are constructed of mortar, native white quartzite rock, and various found materials. The Village is the work of one man, Henry Warren.

White Rock Village is an intriguing and impressive work, drawing considerable attention from the surrounding community and from

*In 1982 State Route 86 was widened and straightened so that it no longer runs immediately by White Rock Village. To see the Village from the new road is now quite difficult, and not as many visitors stop to look around. Motorists can still see the White Rock Service station to the east of the road. An access road at the gas station leads visitors up one block to the Village. Mrs. Warren still lives at White Rock, and she welcomes visitors.

Mary Anne McDonald is finishing an M.A. in folklore at the University of North Carolina. She wrote her study of White Rock Village during a course with Charles Zug III.

passers-by. Its eccentricity by itself did not attract me; I also became interested in Mr. Warren's use of available materials and his improvising on traditional patterns of stonemasonry to express an idea in its construction. Its attraction and aesthetic appeal certainly make it deserving of study. But should it be studied by folklorists? Is it folk art? For that matter, what definitions of folk art can we bring to such a creation?

No single definition of folk art exists that folklorists completely agree upon. For the purpose of this discussion, I shall set some boundaries suggested by my readings. First, to be "folk," folk art should have some connection with a traditional craft or grow out of a traditional culture. Kenneth Ames, however, points out:

While tradition is necessary for folk art, it is not sufficient. Keeping the emphasis on art, variations on tradition are usually more valued than tradition itself because they met more readily the requirements of novelty, uniqueness, and innovation. The kind of innovation acceptable in folk art is conciliatory invention, the combination of current and earlier ideas to create an object which reconciles the past and present.¹

So while existing within a tradition, folk art also contains elements of innovation and individuality.

Second, most folklorists agree that folk art should not be part of high or popular culture. Henry Glassie stresses the importance of knowing the context in which an object was created:

During the time of the construction of a folk object the tradition out of which it is produced cannot be part of the popular (mass, normative) or academic (elite, progressive) cultures of the greater society with which the object's maker has had contact, and as a member of which he may function.²

Third, the folk artist should come from or be a member of a community having active and continuous traditions. It should be a folk society in a broad sense: to some degree homogeneous, isolated (by choice or by extraneous factors), and aware of itself as a community. Henry Warren's White Rock Village falls well inside these rough boundaries for folk art.

Although space keeps me from describing all twenty buildings in White Rock Village, I want to describe briefly some of the major and more interesting buildings. This short description and the accompanying photographs will give some idea of the appearance, scope, and feeling of the Village. The whiteness of the rock and the neatness of the little buildings are the first qualities that strike the visitor (Figure 1). The buildings are crowded together like a country town, not rowed in straight streets in an urban development. Its entrance is an improvised gateway made from steel pipe. A sign hangs from the top of the entrance announcing SHANGRI LA in pressed-on reflective metal letters. This same type of lettering, commonly used on rural mailboxes and homemade signs, identifies many of the structures. One of the first



Figure 1. A view of White Rock Village.

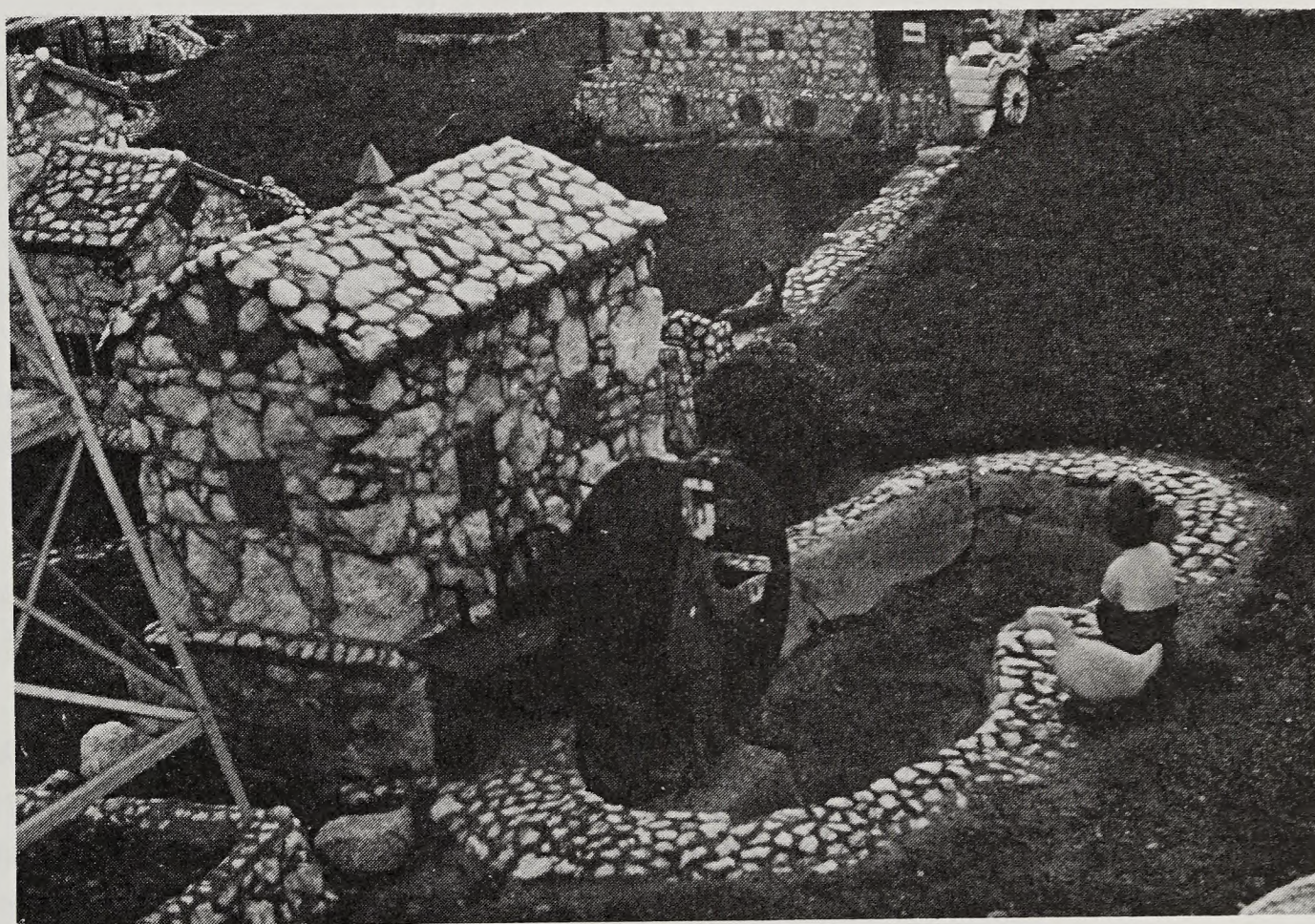


Figure 2. The mill complex with ceramic and wooden statues.

buildings is a mill, complete with metal water wheel, stone mill pond, ceramic ducks and dog, a small ceramic black coachman hitching post, and a wooden miller who looks like a figure from a whirligig (Figure 2). To its right, against a fence, are three unlabeled buildings that look like dwellings, all under three feet high. Near them is the A.B.C. store with red brick in its door trim, foundation, and stairway. On the other side of the mill is a wooden sign on stone base for The Little Brown

Church in the Dell. Mr. Warren must have patterned this sign after the usual signs found in the front yards of many North Carolina churches. The large church, almost five feet high, looks like it belongs to a financially prosperous congregation. It has an ornate entrance on its gable side, grand stairway, and steeple topped by a metal cross.

Mr. Warren's Village is complete with municipal buildings. The two-story Shangri La School incorporates patio blocks into its first floor and red brick for the windows. A small ceramic pagoda sits on each side of its entrance. Two attic windows complicate its roof work. To the right of the school is a small cafe. On the opposite side is a two-story Town Hall with a wooden person inside (Figure 3). A sign identifies him as Mayor John Doe, and he presides over an administrative structure including a hospital and the largest building of all, Health, Education and Welfare. Shangri La is not free from crime for next to the Town Hall is the jail. Perhaps to provide the jail with occupants, Mr. Warren built Watergate, two and a half stories high with a second-story porch around three sides. Towards the back of the Village is a more fanciful structure, Tea for Two, a sort of outdoor kitchen with fireplace, logs, frying pan, and kettle.

Shangri La is laid out in roughly three rows of buildings with two roads or pathways in between. These paths are from five to eight feet wide and invite the visitor to wander through the Village. The fronts of the buildings on the perimeter of the Village face the road they border, but the middle buildings face forward towards Rt. 86. This arrangement makes the entire central section seem like a semi-open square or public area which includes, for example, the mill and Tea for Two.

Mr. Warren built the Village using regional materials—local quartzite rock and sand. He also incorporated many found items such as electric insulators, a brake drum (Figure 4), patio blocks, wood, glass, various pieces of scrap metal, red bricks, and ceramic figurines. All the buildings are solid and completely non-functional and the work of one man. White Rock is Mr. Warren's expressive statement, his work of art.

When I went to photograph the Village, I parked at the White Rock Gas Station a few hundred yards down the road from the Warren home. Behind and to the side of the gas station stands a small square house with a porch. As I was photographing the white rock clocktower in front of the station, an elderly black man came out on the porch of the house and started to talk with me. Serendipity struck: Mr. Pennix had grown up with Mr. Warren, sharecropped for him for years, and had even helped haul materials for the Village. At eighty-one Junius A. Pennix is a lively, open talker and seems to have an excellent memory. His seventy-four-year-old wife, Ollie Mae Pennix, is just as friendly. Mr. and Mrs. Pennix happily provided much information about the views of the community towards White Rock Village and Mr. Warren, and details about Mr. Warren's construction methods.

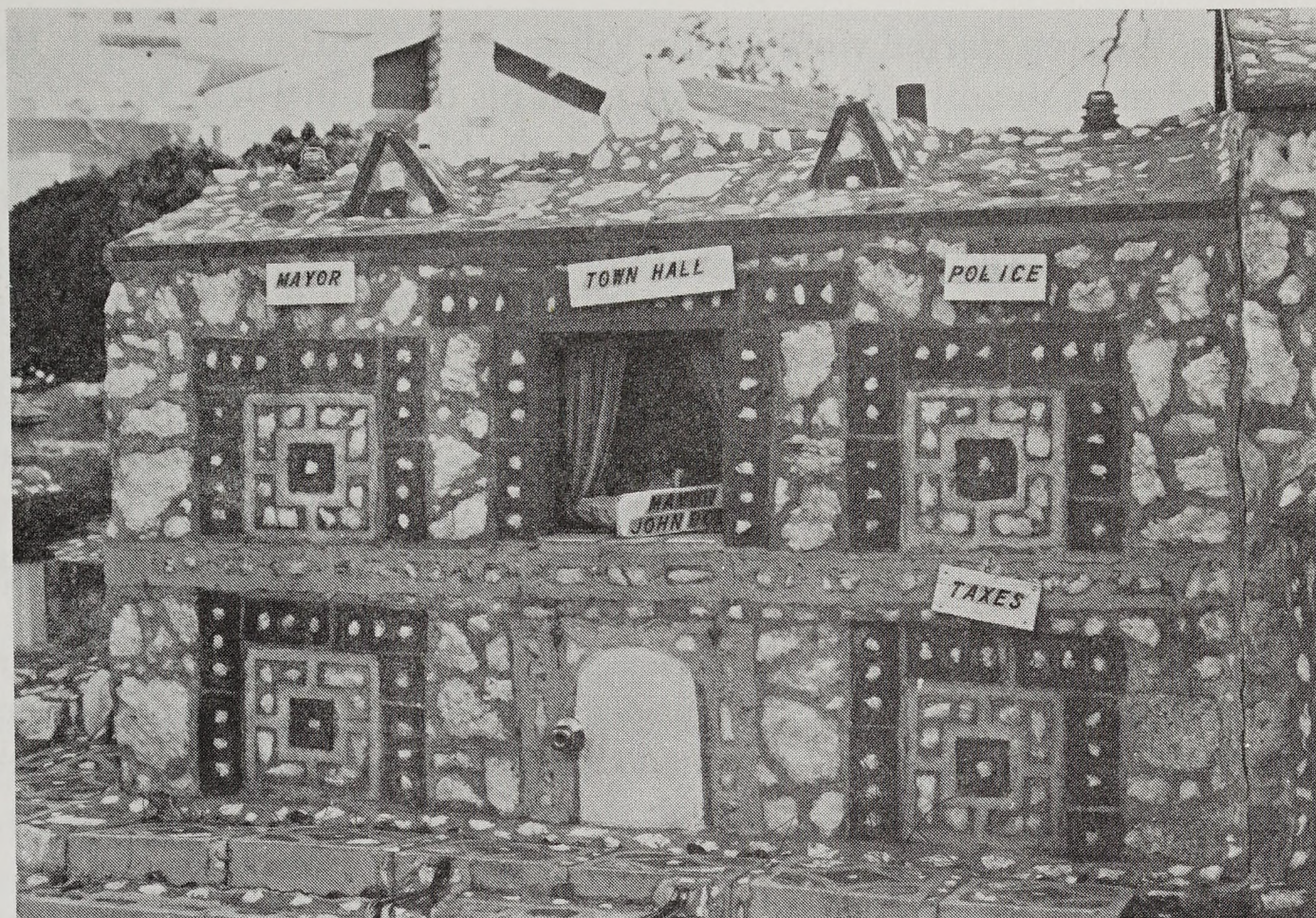


Figure 3. The Town Hall building. Mayor John Doe sits in the window of the second story.

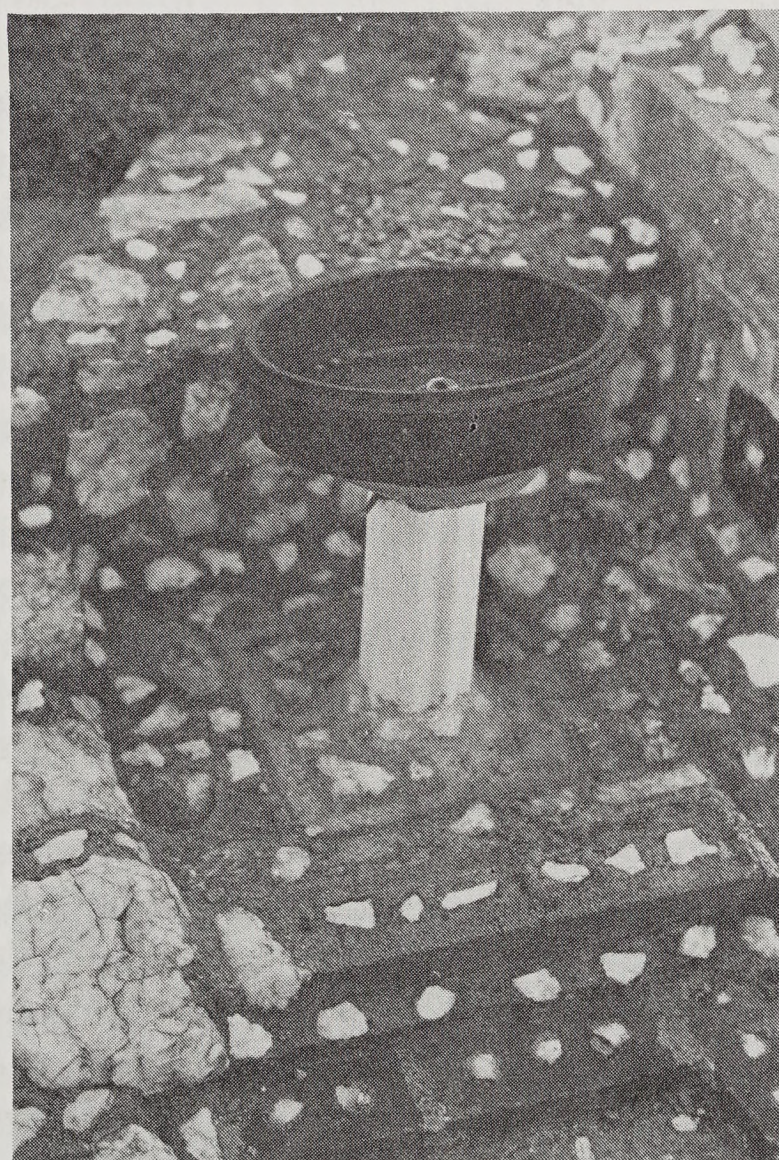


Figure 4. A brake-drum birdbath incorporated into a stonework patio.

Mr. Warren started work on the Village in 1968 after he retired. He worked on it steadily for nine years until his death in 1978. Mr. Warren's jobs brought him little contact with the fine arts. His wife described him as "a merchant and a farmer, and a public servant, really."³ He ran the small White Rock Gas Station and Store for years and according to Mr. Pennix he was the registrar for the draft as well.⁴ Mrs. Warren states her husband had received no training in art, formal or otherwise. "It all just came natural, he just picked it up," she said. He did sketch out rough plans. Mrs. Warren adds that for each structure, "he would sketch the base, how much space, you know, he wanted on the bottom. And how much was going on up and how he was going to fix it."

Although Mr. Warren conceived of and built the Village all by himself, he had some help from his wife and Mr. Pennix. Mrs. Warren said that "nobody ever helped him do anything, to my knowledge." Yet later on in that same interview she stated:

I helped him mark and glue and something, but ah—buy him letters and look for things that he wanted and things of that kind. And I always helped him mow and sweep and clean up, you know. But as far as the actual rock laying, I didn't lay any—I might have stirred the cement sometimes for him, you know, or got him some water or some little things like that—but I didn't do any of the actual work.

Mr. Pennix tells how he hauled sand and rock for the Village and how he even used dynamite to blast out the rock: "He'd say, 'Can you help me get some more sand or some rocks?' and I'd say okay....Yeah, I'd help him get a whole lot [of stone]. You'd have to blast it."

Mr. Warren never did masonry work for a living. When he started to do stonework no one taught him; "he just picked it up," says Mrs. Warren. Mr. Pennix concurs: "No one started him to do stonework." Since no one actively passed on the traditional craft of masonry to Mr. Warren and he did not apprentice to a master craftsman, many folklorists would not count him as coming from a continuous folk tradition of stonework. But I think that there are other acceptable methods of learning a traditional craft in a traditional manner that qualify Mr. Warren as a traditional craftsman. Stone fascinated Mr. Warren all of his life. The foundation and chimney of his house are made out of white rock. In 1936 he had a low white rock wall built around the house and two lawn chairs built out of white rock that sit in the front yard under a large shade tree. According to Mr. Pennix a man from Burlington did this stonework. Since Mr. Warren is dead, it's impossible to know if he watched this Burlington stonemason and picked up skills from him. Neither Mrs. Warren nor Mr. Pennix had much information on this, but they didn't think that Mr. Warren had learned much from watching the man work. But whether or not he learned anything by direct observation of a traditional mason at work, Mr.

Warren was certainly surrounded by examples of traditional craftsmanship. Mr. Pennix spoke directly of this influence: "I think he started by taking the pattern from on the side of his house." Because he could learn some of the skills passively by observing and copying these numerous examples, I think he qualifies as a craftsman from within a continuous tradition. Professor C. Zug has pointed out that in many pottery workshops apprentices were given a minimum of active instruction and learned mostly through imitating the finished pots when the senior craftsmen were out of the shop or not using the wheel.⁵ When viewed with this perspective Mr. Warren's method of learning masonry does not appear so different from that of accepted traditional craftsmen.

"Why would anyone spend nine years making these cute, but useless, little houses?" This is the question that many people ask when looking at the White Rock Village. It is a good question, but I don't think there is a simple answer. Mr. Warren died in 1978, so I rely on the information available from Mrs. Warren and Mr. and Mrs. Pennix. When I asked Mr. Pennix why Mr. Warren built the houses, he replied, "He just wanted to do something, something to occupy his mind." Mrs. Warren says, "He was just doing it as a hobby."

Retirement or the death of a spouse often triggers folk artists such as Mr. Warren to begin work on a project. Steve Ashby of Fauquier County, Virginia, began making multimedia whirligigs and sculptures in 1963 shortly after his wife's death.⁶ Rev. Howard Finster of Summerville, Georgia, began his "paradise garden" (a cement construction incorporating glass, mirrors, hubcaps, and other found materials) after he retired from the ministry.⁷ And John Queen of Kings Mountain, North Carolina, began making his "windmills" in 1979 after his retirement.⁸ Mr. Warren clearly fits this pattern of beginning an artistic career in response to either personal loss or loss of occupation.

Building the Village not only helped Mr. Warren pass the free time brought about by his retirement but also gave him the opportunity to talk to members of his community as well as to passers-by. The transition from productive and socially involved member of a community to the more socially limited world of retirement is difficult and traumatic for many people. Mr. Warren spent many years working at the White Rock Gas Station and Store where he saw many people regularly. Retirement and his solitary farm work must have been quite an adjustment for him. Working outside in his front yard on the White Rock Village provided Mr. Warren with another avenue for daily interaction with his community and with the passers-by whom he would have seen in his work at the store.

In an interview in October of 1979, folklorist Doug DeNatale asked Mrs. Warren if her husband built the Village with the idea that people

would come by. She replied, "No, not at first. I don't think he ever thought about that. He was just doing it as a hobby." But later she does say how much her husband liked to have the company, "the people that stop to look." She adds, "He did [enjoy talking to people]. He talked to lots of people, he just enjoyed company some days, you know. He'd come to the house.... 'Well, I haven't done anything this afternoon but had company.' He'd just sit there and smoke and entertain." When I talked with Mrs. Warren she repeated how much her husband liked to talk with the people who stopped. And Mr. Pennix affirmed that "Mr. Warren used to love to have visitors stop. He'd tell them, 'Get out [of the car]! Get out! Look! Help yourself.'" Even if Mr. Warren didn't begin work on the village in order to have more interaction with the community, he certainly seemed to enjoy the attention that the Village brought and seemed willing to put actual construction aside to talk to people who stopped.

The placement of the Village seems designed to attract attention from passers-by on Rt. 86. According to Mr. Pennix and Mrs. Warren, Mr. Warren started construction close to the edge of his property, right beside Rt. 86. He filled this front area first and then built back when space ran out. The large white arch and Shangri La sign serve to attract attention. Beside the entrance Mr. Warren built a plaque with a motto on it that possibly expresses one function of his Village. The plaque states, "Let me live by the side of the road and be a friend to man." This inviting sign encourages visitors to wander around in this strange little village. Clearly Mr. Warren wanted to attract visitors.

He had a special fondness for children. Mr. Pennix says that Mr. Warren liked children a lot. Perhaps that is one explanation for the small scale of the Village—it is just child size. And children do like it. Mrs. Warren explains, "People come by with children, you can't get them away. I've heard them [the parents] threaten to leave them and everything."

Along with reduced opportunities for socializing, retirement often brings a loss of one's sense of accomplishment. With the daily purpose of work removed, retirees often feel useless. Mr. Warren's White Rock Village provided him with a set of goals and subsequently a lasting achievement as well as something interesting to do. Mrs. Warren describes how her husband started to build the Village:

Mrs. Warren: [He] visited over at Hillsborough at the antique shop there, and he saw the little miller turn the wheel, mill wheel, and he came back and he had the pond down there and he decided well, he'd build a miller's house down there for the Village.

Doug DeNatale: You had a little cement pond there?

Mrs. Warren: Yes, it was already there and he built the mill around that. After that he built the towers, both of the towers, and he decided, well, the miller needs a home, so he went over to the dwelling house over there. He

built that dwelling house. Then he built the little buildings—the garage, the doghouse, and the silo, and the cow shed over there. And he came back and decided, well, build a theater. How do you keep the people down on the farm? Said that's why he built the Rocky Theatre.

There is a linear progression from one building to the next. Completion of each building might have given Mr. Warren the sense of accomplishment of set goals that he had previously received from his work.

Folklorists agree that folk art should be produced by a person within a folk culture. Mr. Warren was member of a rural community that most would term "folk." I am not inclined to declare who is folk and who is not, but I do think that Mr. Warren was a member of what many accept as a folk society. He was from birth a member of one community in one area. Caswell County, where the Warrens lived, is made up of farms and a few small towns. Mrs. Warren says, "He was born and raised at Hightowers, just down the road about three miles, I think....They moved here in '35, came here in 1935, so he lived in this immediate area all of his life." According to Mrs. Warren her husband farmed tobacco most of his life, as did his father. He used old hand-hewn tobacco barns to cure his tobacco, and several families sharecropped for him.

White Rock Village deserves to be called folk art not just because a member of a folk community created it but because it is partly a community creation and reflects the aesthetics and values of the folk community. Throughout the process of inspiration and building of the Village, Mr. Warren interacted closely with his community. Mrs. Warren tells how community members participated in this creation even though they did not provide physical labor. She says, "People would come by visiting and give him ideas about—why don't you build so and so? And he managed, and it just came from that on up." The community even provided some materials. When asked where her husband obtained all the unusual materials found in the buildings, Mrs. Warren replied:

He looked. He just looked for things, you know, that he could use. And people knew that he was doing that so they'd bring him [things]. He had a lot of friends....They'd pick up little things that they thought would be—that he would like and bring them to him, you know, and he'd put them in buildings.

Although I did not attempt to canvass community feelings it seems that besides helping Mr. Warren with materials and ideas, the community seems to like as well as accept the Village. Mrs. Warren stresses there has never been any vandalism. At the end of Doug DeNatale's interview, while in the front yard, Mrs. Warren greets several White Rock visitors by name and chats with them briefly. And Mr. Pennix says of the Village, "Sometimes I just go up by myself when I ain't doing nothing and sit around and look at them."

The Village does not show any connections to high or academic culture, and I don't see any parallels with popular culture either. In an essay on the folk painter Edward Hicks, John Vlach remarks, "Too often the term 'folk art' is used as a convenient umbrella under which many orphaned objects find shelter."⁹ White Rock Village is folk art not simply because it does not fit in anywhere else, but because it was built by a member of a folk community who used a traditional craft and whose work reflects his own values and aesthetics as well as those of his community. The continuation and interpretation of folk values and aesthetics are the essence of traditional culture.

NOTES

1. Kenneth Ames, *Beyond Necessity: Art in the Folk Tradition* (Winterthur, Delaware: The Winterthur Museum, 1977), p. 80.

2. Henry Glassie, *Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978), p. 5.

3. Mrs. Henry Warren, tape recorded interview by Doug DeNatale and Mary Murphy, Yanceyville, N.C., 28 Oct. 1979. All quotations of Mrs. Warren are from this interview unless otherwise noted.

4. Junius A. and Ollie Mae Pennix, tape recorded interview by Mary Anne McDonald and Cece Conway in Yanceyville, N.C., 8 Nov. 1981. All quotations by Mr. or Mrs. Pennix are from this interview.

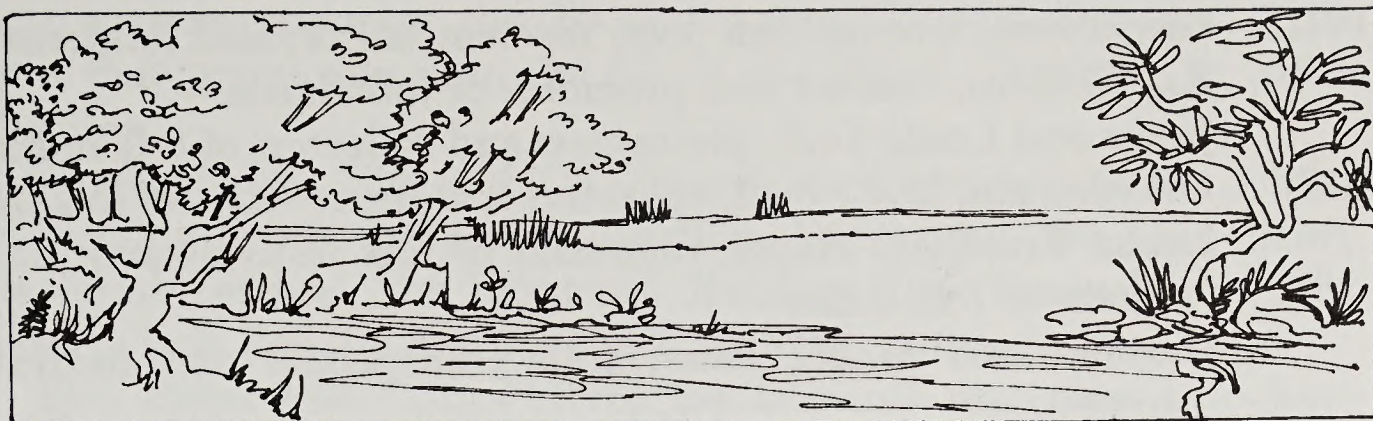
5. Professor Charles Zug III, discussion during office hours on 15 Nov. 1981.

6. Charles L. Perdue, Jr., "Steve Ashby: Virginia Folk Artist," *Journal of the Virginia Folklore Society*, 2 (1981), 55.

7. Georgia Council for the Arts and Humanities, *Missing Pieces, Georgia Folk Art 1770-1976* (Whittet and Shepperson, 1976), p. 106.

8. Tom Stanley, *Worth Keeping, Found Artists of the Carolinas* (Columbia, S.C.: Columbia Museum of Art and Science, 1981), p. 22.

9. John Michael Vlach, "Quaker Tradition and the Paintings of Edward Hicks, A Strategy for the Study of Folk Art," *Journal of American Folklore*, 372 (1981), 164.



The Brown-Hudson Award

The Brown-Hudson Award was established in 1970 to honor two distinguished folklorists and members of the North Carolina Folklore Society, the late Frank C. Brown and the late Arthur Palmer Hudson. Both had served as the Society's Secretary-Treasurer, Dr. Brown from 1913 to 1944 and Dr. Hudson from 1945 to 1966. Dr. Hudson was also the founder and editor until 1966 of *North Carolina Folklore*.

Our state's highest folklore prize, the Award recognizes a resident or native of North Carolina who has contributed in a special way to the appreciation of regional traditions. Past winners of Brown-Hudson Awards are:

- 1971 Lucy Calista Morgan, director of the Penland School of Crafts
Paul Green, playwright, teacher, and collector of local tales
George P. Wilson, professor and folklorist
- 1972 Artus Monroe Moser, collector, folk musician, and singer
Mary Myrtle Cornwell, promoter of folk crafts
Joseph D. Clark, folklorist and professor
- 1973 Bertha Hodges Cook, maker of traditional knotted bedspreads
Bernice Kelly Harris, journalist, playwright, and collector of folklore
Virgil L. Sturgil, performer and collector of mountain music
- 1974 W. Amos Abrams, professor, editor, and collector of folklore
Edd and Nettie Presnell, dulcimer makers and wood carvers
Benjamin E. Washburn, writer, historian, and folklore collector
- 1975 Richard Walser, writer, editor, and folklorist
Cratis D. Williams, teacher, writer, and performer
"Doc" and Merle Watson, folk singers and musicians
- 1976 Ruth Jewell, teacher and promoter of folk dancing
F. Roy Johnson, writer and publisher of folklore books
John Parris, journalist and collector of folklore

- 1977 **Guy Owen**, novelist and poet, teacher, editor, and folklorist
 Kay Wilkins, teacher and promoter of folk dance
 James and Lessie York, performers and collectors of folk music
- 1978 **Grayden and M.C. Paul**, collectors and interpreters of folklife
 Leona Trantham Hayes, organizer of folk festivals and promoter of folk dance
 Herman and Mabel Estes, folk craftspeople and festival organizers
- 1979 **Dorothy Cole Auman**, folk potter and scholar of regional pottery traditions
 Thad Stem, Jr., writer and folklorist
 Rogers V. Whitener, writer, teacher, and folklorist
- 1980 **Daniel Watkins Patterson**, teacher, writer, and folklorist
 Burlon B. Craig, folk potter
 Stanley Hicks, instrument maker, storyteller, folk musician, and dancer
- 1981 **Thomas Jefferson Jarrell**, folk fiddler and teacher
 Mary Mintz, Richard Lebovitz, Elizabeth Roberson, and Their Students, teachers, writers, and collectors of folklore

1982 Brown-Hudson Awards

At its seventy-first annual meeting, on 20 November 1982 in Chapel Hill, the North Carolina Folklore Society presented Brown-Hudson Folklore Awards to Etta Baker and Cora Phillips, Ovid Williams Pierce, and Holger Olof Nygard.

Etta Baker and Cora Phillips

With the exception of a few years spent in southeastern Virginia, Etta Baker and her sister Cora Phillips grew up at a point where the mountains of North Carolina become the Piedmont, on the Johns River near Colletsville, in upper Caldwell County. The two women absorbed the musical traditions of their family and community, especially those of their father, Boone Reid, who played both the banjo and guitar in a fingerpicking style that in all likelihood derives from the instrumental techniques of the Wolofs and Mandingos. Etta and Cora also assimilated a folksong repertoire that included rags, breakdowns, ballads, and other kinds of pre-blues tunes that were in tradition at least as early as the Reconstruction Era. Through the years Etta and Cora added both early and contemporary blues as well as popular

songs to their repertoire, thus becoming active bearers of musical traditions that practically span the life of the Black experience in North Carolina.

In recent years Etta and Cora have taken their music to the public, performing at colleges and universities, Wolf Trap, the John Henry Memorial Festival, the Mountain Heritage Day Festival, the 1982 World's Fair Folklife Festival, and on three record albums.

Etta Baker and Cora Phillips are fine folk musicians who have entertained us for years with exceptionally good music. They are also adept historians who have shared with us their valuable knowledge of family, regional, ethnic, and interethnic traditions, helping us come to a more complete understanding of the influence of Africa on American culture. And they have served as elegant models of the enormous benefits to be derived from African and European cultural exchange.

In recognition and celebration of these achievements, the North Carolina Folklore Society presents, with considerable pride, the 1982 Brown-Hudson Award to Etta Baker and Cora Phillips.

—William E. Lightfoot
Appalachian State University

Ovid Williams Pierce

It is my privilege to present a Brown-Hudson Award to a long-time friend and colleague whose work is based on a store of knowledge about the folklore of eastern North Carolina which all of us can envy. He has written five novels and numerous short stories, all filled with evidence that he is, in every sense, a bearer of the folk tradition.

He typifies the scholarly writer's genius for re-examining the long forgotten and carelessly discarded experience and giving it new life and new dimension, new significance in fictional re-arrangement. His writing is filled with such experience, the epigrammatic saying subtly embedded in graceful new rhetoric, the ancient proverb reborn in rural dialogue, the inherited remedy explained in simple syntax.

He is a scholarly writer of fiction who is totally faithful to local history. His writings demonstrate the literary uses of folklore in bringing real life to time, to place, and to character in fiction. His works affirm that indeed time, place, and character take on a vitality, intensity, and depth directly in proportion to the folklife encompassed in their rendering. And they bear witness to a truth in fiction writing, that one cannot separate one's own experience from one's fictional interpretations of the meaning of the experience.

His encyclopedic recollections of the folkways of his own forebears and his re-creation of the folk wisdom by which his neighbors, black and white, live out their lives bring to his work an enduring quality that makes it valuable testimony to the prevalence of folkways, a mechanism through which folklore is preserved, a vehicle by which it is delivered to posterity.

Also his fiction displays an exemplary understanding of the contributions of folk heritage to the strength and character of those upon whom a wealth of tradition is bestowed. The children in these novels are raised on folk wisdom. Their very identity, their self-awareness, is born and nurtured in family tradition. Their system of ethics and morality is woven from the fiber of the proverbs and sayings of their elders. Their moral judgments grow firmly in the soil of folk teaching about what's right and what's wrong, and about who is worthy of praise and who is deserving of damnation. Almost without exception, his characters tend their land and breed their livestock by formulas now set down in almanacs. They read their weather by the signs of nature. They know, because they have learned it from their kin, how to tell whether it will rain or snow, whether the winter will be too cold or the summer too dry. Most of them acknowledge their elders as the source of their knowledge, and they live with full confidence in the predictability of the signs they read in the heavens and in the trees and in the behavior of the animals that populate their woods and fields.

His is a genteel rendering of a folk tradition. His writings reflect a humane affection for the cultural heritage of black people; a mastery of the dialectal varieties of their speech, its rich vocabulary; a seasoned familiarity with the curses and cures, the rites and rituals of their African heritage. His black characters in particular nurse their sick, tend their wounded, and bury their dead by remedy and ritual tried and tested by their ancestors. They conquer the land and endure the brutalities of nature because they know the ways of both. Their survival has depended on it.

His use of folk materials has worked on two levels. One is the obvious and easily identified, like the prescription for catching haints in a colander that he used in *The Wedding Guest* and that Bernice Kelly Harris asked him to write again for a collection she edited shortly before her death.¹

The other level is less obvious and more important. It is his intellectual awareness of continuity in human history as it is reflected in the evolution of ritual. One example will suffice, and that example is fitting prelude to the presentation of this award. It is taken from *The Wedding Guest*, and one cannot help being struck by the resemblance which ceremonies bear to each other, in whatever century and in whatever place they are celebrated. In *The Golden Bough* Sir James

Frazer explains in some detail the ritual of the need-fire whose smoke made fertile the barren soil over which it blew and from which ashes were strewn on fields to protect crops against vermin.² He says the custom can be traced from the early Middle Ages when it was denounced as a heathen superstition. But denunciation by the church has not erased it.

In *The Wedding Guest*, the narrator, a retired professor named Kirby Wilson, is sitting on a farm porch at dusk when he becomes aware that a fire is burning some distance from the house.

Then I saw the strange dance of bending figures around the flame. They made a circle of black silhouettes, lifeless except for a rhythmic rise and fall, and an occasional humph, humph, as brooms, shovels, guano bags flailed the ground, smothering runaway streaks that escaped from the ring. These black figures, wildly gesticulating, bowing to earth, were throwing out shadows like the great spokes of a wheel.

I was held to my tracks by what I saw. That turning wheel of black figures, rising, falling, imploring the flames and smoke, seemed to issue from a time before memory. Here were the rites of a need-fire, when primitive man sought to rekindle the blaze of a darkening, disappearing sun, when he beseeched the smoke of his hand-made fire to pass over the heads of his animals and rid them of sickness, over a growing field to bestow fruitfulness upon it, and when man himself leaped through flames to purify his body. Here was the meeting of centuries, the survival of an energy for so long dormant rising now to this moment, this place. I had to remind myself that those figures against the dying flames were men of my time, some of whom I could name.³

The scene he describes is set in Warren County, in eastern North Carolina in the early 1950s. It speaks most eloquently of the eternal commonality of human experience. And that is one of the theories folklorists care about, the eternal commonality of human experience.

In a very special way, Ovid Williams Pierce has qualified himself eminently as a recipient of the Brown-Hudson Award for his scholarly application of folklore to the writing of fiction. It is my pleasure to acknowledge that contribution and to present this award to Ovid Williams Pierce of Greenville.

—Janice Faulkner
East Carolina University

NOTES

1. Ovid Williams Pierce, *The Wedding Guest* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1974); Bernice Kelly Harris, ed., *Strange Things Happen* (Murfreesboro, N.C.: Johnson Publishing Co., 1971), pp. 157-59.

2. James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1978), pp. 739-43.

3. Pierce, *The Wedding Guest*, p. 84.

Holger Olof Nygard

Born to a Swedish family in Vasa, Finland, Holger Olof Nygard began soon thereafter the protracted migration that ultimately led him to North Carolina. His family moved to western Canada, where he was reared and schooled, and whence he made his way down the western coast to the University of California, Berkeley, in the 1940s. At that great institution, out of which so much of importance to folklore scholarship has sprung in the 20th century, Holger worked under the tutelage of such distinguished scholars as Archer Taylor, Bertrand H. Bronson, and Arthur G. Brodeur. Whether his abiding interest in folklore, balladry, medieval studies, linguistics, and comparative study of the intricate and interrelated history of European cultures was first fixed in Berkeley or was simple encouraged by that university's stimulus, his stay there was certainly important in shaping his future.

From Berkeley he moved to the University of Kansas in 1953 to begin his professorial career. In 1957 he moved to the University of Tennessee, and in 1960 to Duke University. Perhaps he was not aware of North Carolina's enticements and could not then anticipate that it would become "home" in some deeper sense, but from his arrival in the state he became active in the North Carolina Folklore Society and in other ways began to show that he did not regard his post at Duke as a scholarly island insulated from the haul and push of North Carolina's intellectual and cultural development.

Holger's publications are varied, but folklorists think of him most as a meticulous, wide-ranging, and stimulating scholar of balladry. His study of *The Ballad of Heer Halewijn*, which earned him the Chicago Folklore Prize in 1959, must be reckoned by all accounts as one of the most rigorous and rewarding exemplars of comparative scholarship in the "historic-geographic" vein. In other studies, notably "Popular Ballad and Medieval Romance" and "Ballad, Folkevis, Chanson Populaire," he applied the comparative critical rigor which suited balladry so well in *Heer Halewijn* to the process of scholarship itself. An astute reader of the writings of other scholars, he has illuminated their historical, ideological, and nationalistic contexts as ably as any scholar in or out of folklore.

Those who know him as a teacher and friend are conscious of the same splendid critical qualities in Holger as a person. But they are also conscious of the many other qualities that have inspired his students and friends. To the scholarly interests must be added the even wider social, cultural, and political interests which have distinguished Holger in North Carolina. As he, Margaret, and their children settled into their historic home on the banks of the Eno, their fascination with

North Carolina turned to a deeper attachment and love. Margaret's sustained and ultimately triumphant devotion to preserving the Eno River and understanding its place in North Carolina's natural and cultural environment became the whole household's devotion. And as Holger was swept up in its current, so were his colleagues, students, and friends. It is thanks to the Nygards, as well as to the larger cultural chemistry of North Carolina's development in the last 20 years, that old mills and statewide folk festivals can now be encountered along the Eno River.

Anyone who has read Holger's writings, or conversed with him on the nuances of international cultural politics, or enjoyed the Nygard hospitality at their home, will take special pleasure in knowing the Brown-Hudson Award has honored him. An internationalist on the Eno, he has enriched North Carolina by helping North Carolinians to appreciate more deeply both the wide world and their own back yard.

—Alan Jabbour
American Folklife Center

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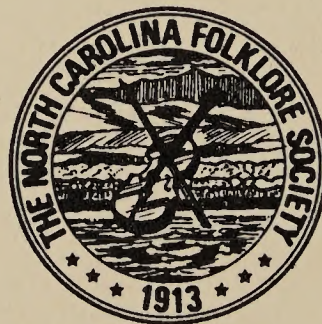
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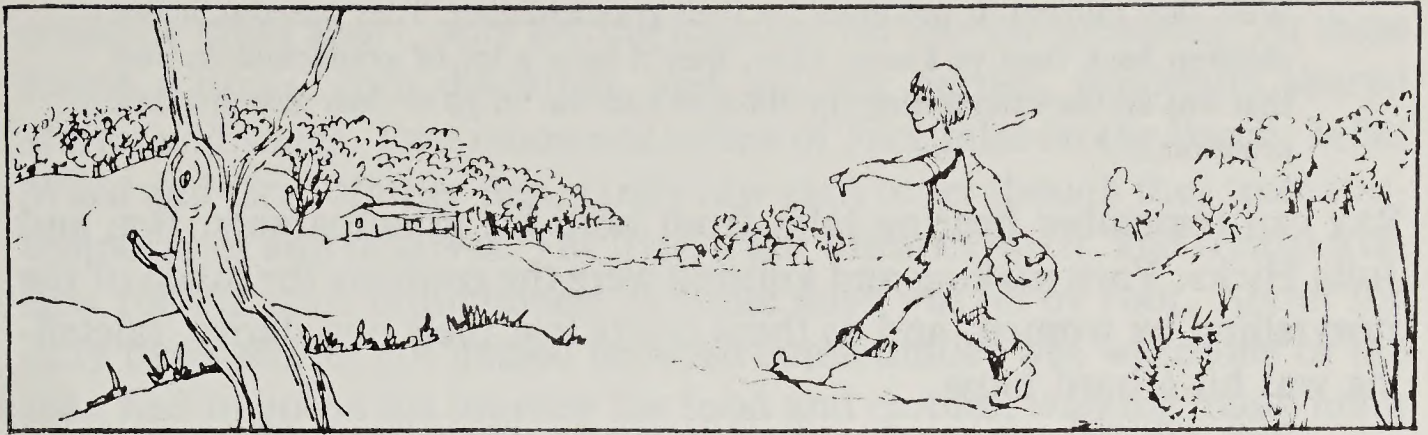
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Two Instances of a Folk Belief in Fiction
James S. Hedges43

Illustrations, *Norma Farthing Murphy*

Cover: National Heritage Fellow Ray Hicks and his wife Rosa. Summer 1982,
Watauga County, N.C. Photograph by Barbara McDermitt.



Fig. 1. Ray Hicks on his front porch during a collecting session. Summer, 1982, Watauga County, N.C. Photo by Barbara McDermitt.



Storytelling and a Boy Named Jack

by Barbara McDermitt

Ray Hicks was born in 1922 on Beech Mountain in Watauga County, North Carolina, where he still lives in the wood frame farmhouse his father built. He comes from a long line of musicians, instrument makers, and storytellers. His father, Nathan Hicks, was a dulcimer and fretless banjo maker as was his father, Benjamin, before him. Ben, as he was called, was also a popular storyteller on the Beech, and Ray learned most of his stories from him. Ray was the only one among all his brothers and sisters to take an interest in the tales and want to learn them by heart. Ray's Uncle Roby, Stanley Hicks' father, also told stories that Ray heard as a boy. The Jack tales about Jack, Will and Tom caught Ray's imagination, and years of practice telling them to families in his community and to his own five children made him a master of his art.

Over the years Ray has had a steady stream of people come to record him telling his stories, singing, and playing his harmonica. A disc of his Jack tales was put out by Folk Legacy Records, and Appalshop and East Tennessee State University have produced films of this great folk artist. He has been a guest artist at almost every Jonesboro Storytelling Festival since it opened in 1972 as well as receiving innumerable invitations to tell his Jack tales at primary schools, colleges and universities, fairs and folk festivals throughout the Southern Mountains. In summer of 1983, the National Endowment for the Arts presented Ray and his cousin Stanley Hicks National Heritage Fellowships.

When Ray was a boy, storytelling was very popular, especially among children. It was their main entertainment outside of the music the men-folk used to produce from time to time. The music was for everyone; the stories were mostly for the children. Interestingly it was rarely the parents that told the stories, but rather the grandparents, the parents being too busy with domestic work. Ray remarks:

Well, they told em. It was more for their grandchildren. They raised so many children back then ye know. They, they'd have a lot of grandchildren and that was all the entertaining the children had was to go to their grandpa and grandma....*

Ray can remember hearing tales from both his grandparents, Ben and Julia Hicks. Yarn making and knitting were the contexts for much of the storytelling by women, and as these crafts lost their popularity, taletelling was hit a hard blow.

Well, now I'm goin to tell ye about the women tellin stories...some way or somehow till the spinnin quit. Now ye see I watched it and remembered it when a lot of people didn't. Now my grandmother down here on my Dad's side was yet a-knittin, was yet a-knittin in the mountains when I was big enough to get em some firewood. Her spinnin wheel got broke, and she twisted the wool with her fingers, washed it an picked it. I helped to pick a lot of wool. Now that's what the grandchildren would enjoy a lot...help their grandma pick this wool. And so now grandma at that time she told tales, stories to the children while she'd be knittin. Oh, they was wonderful! Gosh, I could listen to em. They'd tell Indian tales. Grandma'd be there a-knittin a stockin or a glove an a-tellin this story...and the snow flakes a-fallin that big. I used to know a lot of em, but I forgot em. But then it went on like the knittin quit an their life changed. Different. Wasn't at home like that. As much. Then ye see the cars come in, ridin it. And so memories changed.

It was his Grandfather Ben who mainly told the Jack tales:

The women didn't tell Jack tales. Not too much. They'd tell em some when the men were gone. But it was these other tales, hainted tales, ghost tales, the women told more, and Indian tales.

Ray took to the stories from his earliest memories. He loved to hear them over and over again, never tiring of them, and when he grew older he loved to tell them equally well. But his brothers and sisters did not share his enthusiasm, at least not to the same degree.

It's just me still tells the stories, just me cut out by likin em when when I was a little boy. Reason I like to tell em yet. I just love em ye know. And then ye gotta love little children. Ye gotta have a love fer everybody....I've told em to little children till they get up to each leg, one hangin here, just had to get their head on me. One would say, "Move a little, I can't see Ray's mouth." Ye know you can get more out of a tale if you can see the actions of their mouth and their mind as they tell it and their eyes as they come with the sentences. And that's the way I done Granddad. I'd get on his leg and grandmother an him. See I'd set down with em and let em tell the tale. An say, "Tell that again, I'd like to learn how to tell hit." Then I'd ask em a question what hit meant. An that was the reason hit got on up. But [my brothers and sisters] just wasn't interested an forgot em, ye see. For me hit's inherited I think, inherited in the people.

Stories on the Beech were swapped more within a community than between different communities. Distances were a problem. Kin and neighbors were not close at hand. Cabins could only be constructed where spring water was near at hand, there being no equipment for deep well digging on the Beech when Ray was a boy. This meant neighbors

*Texts were collected in summer 1982 at Ray's home, Watauga County, N.C. Copies of tapes are in the Appalachian Collection, Appalachian State University.

could be miles apart, only getting together for special occasions. At these house raisings, corn shuckings, and quilting parties, neighbors shared stories and songs. Two renowned tellers of Jack tales on the Beech, Miles Ward and Grandfather Ben, rarely saw each other though they were contemporaries and relatives. They lived a fair distance apart, and transportation for the poor mountaineer in those days was all by foot. About the only times stories got passed between communities was when one of the men had to go on his journey for food and clothes, walking many miles to the nearest store to do some trading. Going and coming he would visit with old friends and kin, and they swapped news, stories and songs.

When Ray was in his teens he was already recognized in his community as a teller of tales and was invited into homes to entertain the children. But besides the few “public” storytellers there were many others who passed on stories within the close confines of the family circle.

There’s a lot told stories, but they didn’t tell em out in public. Just to their kids, ye know. Ye see I told em. They welcomed me to come to their homes, and then the others would come, and gosh I’d have crowds of children. The room would be full. That was before television come in the mountains. Now adder [after] television come and cut it down a lot. Television ruined it. They got me to come to some of their homes. An I got there, and they got television an they got it turned on so loud, they quit listenin to me an I couldn’t tell no tale, an I quit. An they just thought they wanted me to tell tales. You can’t tell a tale with a television a-goin. And you can’t do nothin like that when your audience is lookin at somethin else. You’ve gotta have the spirit workin both ways. That’s how I learnt how a bishop was, a preacher. That’s what was makin em when I used to go to the ole timey revival in the mountains here, when they’d make your hair stand up.

Having the right mood or spirit both as storyteller and audience was very important to Ray.

I learned [the tales] as I come up. Learned em of a words. Not othern words, not try an tell em like the otherns. I’s a-tellin em as I learnt em, put my words in.... If the mood hain’t right I can’t think of all the words I need to come in there.... The way you’er feelin is important. If ye hit that feelin that hain’t right you won’t do so good at singin or tellin tells.

On another occasion Ray again likened telling Jack tales and getting the right mood and spirit to a revival meeting. Once when he was a lad a preacher was giving a series of three revival meetings in his community. The first two were quiet; they lacked excitement. The preacher announced that a bad spirit clouded the congregation—some little hate between people that had to be mended before he could preach properly. It had to be cleared up right away. The antagonism was relieved, and the third night the spirit was right. That night’s meeting “set the place rocking!” “So,” says Ray, “that’s the way tellin a tale is!”

When I asked Ray which Jack tale was his favorite, he said:

I like em all, if ye get em told right. A difference in tellin em, the tales. Ye gotta, ye got the mood of each tale, ye have to figure out to tell hit in ye voice

or your thinkin of what the words to put in to make hit sound good. You don't tell the tales just from the way they was put down; ye tell em to suit your own, your own feelins, the way I tell em.

As much as Ray loves the Jack tales, he pointed out time and again that not everyone shared his feelings. The evangelical churches round and about where he grew up were opposed to the tales, and there were people in the past and today who feel Jack tales are wrong.

Some people say tellin a Jack tale ain't the right spirit, back an some yet. That ain't right, they say. Ye need to be teachin somethin to the Lord, tellin the people. But now I believe that the spirit in a tale as long as you was givin people ease, long as they war givin ease, an you were helpin them with their feelins. I believe anything is good to the Lord. There hain't nothin wrong in tellin a tale.

The conflict between church views toward Jack tales and Ray's views is of serious concern to Ray, and yet he shows a sense of humor about the problem. Once Ray got invited to tell a Jack tale at the opening of a new Lutheran church. It was a social event, and the preacher wanted Ray to entertain the children. Afterwards the preacher said to him, "Mr. Hicks, I believe you've told those Jack tales so long you believe in them." And Ray said, "Yeah, an you've preached so long you believe in hit!... And," says Ray, "they never did call me back no more!" Ray doesn't feel the tales are morally bad for children. "It's just that it's not true, that's what the church has against it." Yet Ray insists that a narrator has to believe in the tale while he tells it in order to capture the magic. But even afterwards, outside the narrative context, he thinks some of what's in a Jack tale is somehow true.

The real conflict centers on the character of Jack.

[The church] didn't approve of the Jack tales, an don't yet, some people don't. Says they oughtn't to be allowed [because Jack] he done them things, cheatin people. And the Bible it don't give that to do nobody wrong. To snow em under you'd call it. They feared the children would learn to cheat an outsmart people.

But Jack, in Ray's mind, is not really a cheater; he is clever all right, but not a bad man.

I think Jack was a whole lot like that, in some of the tales. Now you see they all tell it different. In the sense it was goin in. Was do good fer evil an not turn railin fer railin. An Jack I think like I said, he was the kind a man if ye hit him on one cheek, he'd just turn the outhern, an say, hit it. An then he'd just change around there, an then outsmart em, an git it back! Is the way I think Jack was now. Outsmarted em.

Ray admires Jack's cleverness on one hand, and on the other he admits his own conscience doesn't allow him to outsmart people the way Jack does.

It goes in the tales that Jack was an upright young man. He would help people in the tales, in places. Do good. He was kindly. I put it it's like the story of Jesse James. He would rob from the rich and give to the poor. Jack was a feller like that.

Ray gave as an example the tale, "Unlucky Jack and Lucky Jack." The man hiring Unlucky Jack outsharped him by having him sign a contract he didn't understand. Under this agreement Jack had to work without getting fed, and if he got angry the man could cut strips out of his back. This cruel man treated Jack in a bad way and finally did lacerate Jack's back. Lucky Jack came along and found Unlucky Jack bleeding to death in the road. He took the injured Jack to the doctor and saved his life. Here Lucky Jack showed his good nature. Ray insists "Jack was an upright man," but also admits, "and in other ways he was pretty rough....There are lots of people like that. Would do you bad in ways. When comes that you were helpless, they'd help ye quicker than one of the others. Now that's the kind of feller I think Jack was."

Ray looks to this particular tale to explain himself. He sees himself in both Unlucky Jack and Lucky Jack. Ray said that as a boy he was like Unlucky Jack. He hated to speak up and would be cheated often. He said when he picked berries, the men who weighed them often cheated him out of pounds, but he didn't have the courage to say anything. Finally, as a grown man, Ray learned to stand up for himself and for what was his, and he found people liked him better for it. He believes,

Everyone's out to hold up fer himself, but not go fer cheatin. There ain's nobody goin to hold up fer ye. That's what hurt me so bad and made me suffer as a kid. I didn't know to hold up fer myself. I was like Unlucky Jack. An I didn't learn to do it till just a few year ago. I was about forty year old....
Lucky Jack wins out by holding out fer himself.

Ray also likens Will and Tom, the losing brothers, to Unlucky Jack. He says that they're always unlucky because they "try and grab luck too quick. They don't think it through.... They're too greedy, a-wantin to take it all like the sheep in "The Heifer Hide"...and they're too trusting. The lucky ones are more careful."

Ray in his own life used to think everyone felt as he did about being honest and honorable in treating people right and keeping promises. He had to learn the hard way that this wasn't always the case, just as Unlucky Jack did. But Ray still hates to "pop it back" when someone's treated him badly because it goes against the Bible teachings.

After telling the story "The Cat and the Mouse," Ray was fast to point out that in this tale Jack got his luck because of his generosity and courage, his willingness to help an enchanted girl even though it meant risking his life and not even knowing there was going to be any reward at the end. Also, at the story's conclusion, he didn't hold a grudge against his brothers who had tried to kill him. Instead he forgave them and still had a humble heart. "That," says Ray, "that's what made his luck, by being good, and then in some stories by being good and then tricky."

It was the "tricky" side of Jack's character Ray felt he had to defend.

Back in the old days in the mountains people were taught more of the Old Testament law than they are now. People was teach'd an eye fer an eye and a

tooth fer a tooth, an so that made Jack raised up like that. It was tough. You had to do things to live that your heart desire or your conscience didn't want to do because you had your families and the food was so light.

Ray doesn't mean by this that anyone could just steal from his neighbor.

Now robbin, that ain't God's law to rob somebody out of their work.... Well now Jack, what I was a-meanin, he didn't go an bare face rob nobody, ye see. He talked em out of it. That's what I'm a gettin to. Jack didn't go in an pull a gun on em an say give me that. Like the robbers told him [in "Jack and the Robbers" or "Jack and the Doctor's Daughter"], he had to steal the steer to save his life or the robbers would kill him. The three farmer's steers. Jack wasn't a man like the robbers was, holdin a gun.... Jack just took it by talkin hit out of em. He wouldn't hurt nobody. He ain't wanted to steal the steers. He just got caught in it. Course that farmer needed his oxen paid bad, him and his wife and children. Probably had several children. And they needed it bad. Well Jack needed it too. Worse than he did because he was goin to get killed.

To Ray Jack has always been a hero: "I felt that he was a hero. That's the reason I know the tales to tell em. I felt I wanted to be like Jack." He was like Jack even as a little boy. Ray describes himself as being always dirty and grubby, not well thought of by his father or well looked after by his mother. Often he was left behind by his parents because he was too dirty to go with them, just like Jack in "The Cat and the Mouse" who was too dirty to go with his brothers when they left home to seek their fortune. Ray and his family were poor like Jack. He can remember his mother crying because she had no food to feed the children, like Jack's mother. And Ray would tell his mother not to worry; he'd go out and find some kind of job and bring in some food or money, just like Jack. In other words the boys grew up in similar fashion. The main difference is that Ray's conscience did not allow him to cheat people, and Jack sometimes did cheat people. He outsharped them, and Ray couldn't do that.

...that's the way it was when I growed up...when you git like I tell it I'm Jack. Everybody can be Jack. Jack ain't dead. He's a-livin. Jack can be in anybody...like I tell em sometimes, I'm Jack. I've been Jack. I mean in different ways. Now I ain't everthing Jack has done in the tales, but still I've been Jack in a lot of ways. It takes Jack to live. Now I wouldn't have been a-livin a-probably if I'd not been Jack's friend.... A lot of people would have, when I was a little boy, they would help me. They would give me some wood, wouldn't hurt em at all. They wouldn't let me tech it. Well, that's where Jack comes in. A lot of times you have to go get it, slip an get it, if you live. Hit says ask first fer everthing ye git, but I'll tell anybody one thing if you have to ask fer everthing ye get ye'll live hard cause there ain't enough of em to let ye have hit. They won't see it right.

Despite television coming to the mountains and becoming the main family entertainment, Ray holds out high hopes for the continuation of storytelling and epecially the telling of his beloved Jack tales.

Now adder television come in the mountain that cut storytelling down a lot for awhile, but [the children] they've got used to it now, and if I wasn't sick

they'd be callin me now to come to their homes.... Why [storytelling] it's becoming popular now. You'd hear about Jonesboro, Tennessee? Well, now you see, I'se the one who got that started. I'se the one who really got it started, now to Jonesboro, the storytelling of the tale, Jack tales, was Ray's. I was the lead teacher. Now there's lots of storytellers, ye see.

Ray feels good about the modern storytellers he's met at Jonesboro. He thinks they have the right feeling, that they really care. Many of them have come to him to learn the stories and are now telling them themselves. Ray appreciates this continuation of his traditions. Storytelling is his life. He would rather listen to a good tale or, even better, tell one himself than anything else. He enjoys the modern audiences who are the new converts to storytelling.

Why it was special to me? Was just, there was somethin in it I liked, a spirit, a feelin I liked to tell em to people that wanted em told, that enjoyed hearin them. It gives ye a lot of pleasure to see [audiences liking your stories], and then ye gotta love, ye gotta have a feelin of love, livin children and human beings to tell. You've gotta love the audience, and even if they done ye wrong try an do good fer evil. Lovin the people, that's hit.

Ray's formula for the successful storyteller comes naturally to him. He loves the stories out of his heritage, the Jack tales, and this feeling of caring is extended to all those who are fortunate enough to hear him tell them.

The Doctor's Daughter or Jack and the Robbers

Well, this one here I'm a-fixin to tell is about Jack and his parents. At this time they were a-rentin, a-stayin on this doctor's place, a-share croppin, and a-workin fer him a-doin everthing that he said. Had to, you know. Gosh back at that time if you rented they, ye know people liked renters to work, and if you were a good and they'd git the advantage of ye and make you do all the work. They'll have ye work till ye can't stand up...

And so Jack, he, he just couldn't stand it. This doctor was a-pinnin him down so tight. An with his Dad and Tom and Will, an he just couldn't stand being bound down that tight. Couldn't even git off on Sunday but what he was callin on him to do something. An so directly, the doctor had a daughter. He'd raised an awfa beautiful daughter. She was beautiful. An Jack he'd got around there an seed her. Get her speak a few words. He got struck on her, an got to tryin to tease around a little bit to see if he could get started talkin to her ye know, to marry maybe.

An so she had told her dad, the doctor. She told what Jack had been a-tryin to pull on her a little, ye know. An so the doctor come down and told, Jack was gone, but got with Jack's dad. Said, "Now your son, Jack, been a-pesterin a little of my daughter about maybe wantin to take, get her as his wifemate. Would work out if we 'lowed it, get him started talkin to her it'll work out that way." And he said, "Now I'm goin to make it with your son Jack that any boy that gits to talk to my daughter got to be worth a thousand dollars."

(You could call it, but it was a thousand guineas back then the guineas it could mean, if it was a thousand, it would mean ten dollars. Like they counted by the pennies. A hundred pennies was a dollar and they called a penny a guinea, is the best I can remember...A hundred guineas, that would be a dollar. A thousand would be ten hundred pennies, a thousand dollars. An they call it a thousand guineas.)

An so Jack come in, an Jack's daddy said, "Now, son," he said, "you a-pestern around that little girl up there, his'n." Said, "You just as well quit."

Said, "Why?"

Said, "He was down here awhile you was gone an said any boy that talked to his girl had to be worth a thousand guineas." (Or a thousand dollars to say it now.) He said, "You just as well quit."

An he said, "Bedad, I can try cuttin it."

"Oh," he said, "what would you make it at?"

"Well," he said, "I said I can try." Said. "I've got to have that girl." Said, "I love 'er. My feelings. I've got to have that girl. If it's any chance."

An so he took off, left home. Didn't tell where'n the hair nor the tail he was a-goin. An he went off. Got in the woods at that time not many people near and got lost. He got lost an didn't know a hair'n the tail where he was at. An so along about ten or eleven o'clock in the night he was goin down a holler a-feelin in the dark of the woods a-wonderin what would he do to live. That it was dark as dungeon, that he was hungry an so weak an hit a-rain—an hit a-lookin like thunderin, an it was goin to go to rainin on him at any time. An with the wild animals in the woods to eat 'im up. An directly happen to see a little light a-shinin way down in the woods. That holped him, an he 'ginnin to tire, an got down through there an come to this light in the woods gettin closer. An when he got to it, it was a little house way back in them woods. And he pecked—he went up to the door an the rain was a-runnin down. It started rainin, a-pourin down off the eave of the house in his shirt, just a-drownin him yet. An his hair all stuck to his head.

An so this little woman come out. An she said, "What are you here fer?"

He said, "I'm lost. I'm lost, lady. I'm lost. If you'd be my friend, I'm lost. An could you do something to help me?"

She said, "Oh, my gosh." Said, "This is a highway robber's house." Said, "They caught me to stay with them, an I have to stay with them looks like." Says, "There's no way out to keep their house here. Keep everthing a-goin while they've gone." Said, "They kill everybody that comes here." Said, "They say dead people tell no tales."

An so he said, "Well, bedad, I'd just as soon be killed as to drown out here in this rain," an just walked on in by her. "By golly, I'm froze. I'm hungry an I'm wet and I'm froze an I feel like I've half drowned."

An she said, "Well, well, come on in."

An he got on in there an 'gin to get a little warm. An he looked over an they had some straw a-layin over in another little ole closet of a room, called it, a place in there fer the dog to lay on. An he just eased over in that straw an got warmer an went off to sleep.

Now about midnight, about midnight they come in, the robbers come in with what stuff they'd stolen an put it all out on the table to divide it. An they laid their guns out an was dividin it. Bout that time it rustled, it rustled Jack up a little. It woke him a little with the racket of 'em, them a-carryin on rough words [?]. An it woke Jack a little. One of 'em heard 'im. Come up with his gun. Said, "Hold it lady, what made that racket?" And up with his gun.

"Oh," she said, "I forgot to tell ye," an said, "There's this little ole boy like of a man come here an it went to rainin an," said, "I told 'im you wanted to kill 'im, that dead people tell no tales. He said he was drowned, half drowned an he was goin to come in anyhow."

An so that one went over with his gun to the pile of straw where he was on it at. An Jack all ragged. His clothes was kinda ragged. An put the gun on him and said, "Wake up, son." Said, "I've got to shoot you. Put the pistol on him. Said, "I've got to shoot you. Well," he says, "we're highway robbers. Said, "We got it organized 'tween us that dead people tells no tales." Said, "It's the rule to shoot everybody that comes here, that they don't git away alive."

An Jack, he says, "Well, there's one thing about it if you'ns robbers," says, "you'ns can shoot me, that's all you git." Said, "I ain't got a brownie, an my clothes is no good. You can't do nothin with them. My shoes is wore through. My britches is wore out. My shirt's wore out, my cap's full of holes. You won't git nothin but Jack." An that robber got to lookin at him an got to feelin sorry fer him. An he dropped his gun down, clicked it. He had it off, had it clickin off a hammer, had it up pullin the trigger an the hammer a-comin up to go back. An he clicked hit an went back. Said, "Son, would you be a good hand to steal, ye reckon?"

He said, "Bedad, I ort to be if that would maybe save my life."

"Well," he said, "you could save it." Said, "Now do the job an just keep your mouth shut." He says, "They've an ole farm about over here got three oxen, three steers." An said, "If you can—we tried every way to git 'em." An he said, "If you could steal them fer us we'd give ye three hundred guineas a piece fer it."

Well, Jack laid the rest of the night with his heart was a-beatin up in his neck a-studyin what would he do to steal—how would he do to save his life an git the pay too.

Well, he got up next mornin and-a they gave him a little bite to eat and said, "Now you go down to the ole road where it comes through." Said, "He'll be a-comin through now in about an hour."

Well, Jack went around down by the little ole house and they had a calf tied there or a cow they'd stolen an had left a piece of rope. An Jack just snatched it off like he always would an wrapped it around his waist, an went on down to the road an set down. An voices 'uld talk to him through his ears, "Ah, Jack you've got it."

An about that time he heard "Sook buck, saw buck, let's get to town."

An he said, "Oh, my gosh," said, shook his head, shook his fist. Said, "I've got to think of something." An he looked an he seed a big stoopin tree a-hangin over the road. He climbed it right quick an got that rope around his neck an hung on it. Made it look like it somebody'd hung a boy there in that tree.

An so here come the farmer with the steer, "Sook buck, saw buck, let's git to town." He happened to look—"Law me, I'll not git to town today with this deed." He said, "There hangs a boy." An said, "It might be one out of my settlement." An said, "I'll go back to my community an git some men to help me cut it down an see who it is." An so he tied the steer there. An quick as he got out of sight Jack untied an got the steer, took it back to the robbers.

An they said, "Gosh," said, "son, you the beatin hand to steal that's been around this place yet." Said, "You mean you're back with one already?"

He said, "Yeah. He give it to me down yon awhile ago." He said, "I didn't have to steal it." Said, "I just talked 'im out of it."

So the ole farmer come back, an he come with about fifty or sixty men. An he'd run to show 'em, an they took him to be a fool. He'd say, "Right here's the tree, but there hain't nobody in it. Here's where it was at." An they'd run up an down that road, gosh, till they were wore out. They said, "Well, you fool you," said, "you've just seen visions of somebody hung in a tree." Said, "What is you losin your mind?"

An he said, "No, he had seen somebody, ye see, but he's gone." An it was Jack just fooled him up, thought he was dead. He'd a better clomb the tree an looked at him good. So but he didn't. He had him excited. Anybody could do that. I would probably, excited, especially of dead people, ye know.

So they said, "Well, now in the mornin he'll be a-goin with the second one."

An Jack laid all night nearly just dozed a little. His heart comin up "thud, thud, thud." An directly it come daylight, an they hollered him up, an give him a little eatin. An he said, "Gosh," in his mind. "I just don't know now what in the world." An he happened to look on the floor. An he's a-studyin now, a-wonderin what in the nation or world would he git that second steer with. An he happened to look, an the robbers had dropped a brand new

woman's slipper on the floor. Well, Jack jerked it up an snapped it into that hip pocket as quick as lightin. In the sly of 'em so that the woman or none of the robbers wouldn't see—especially if they seed him, and shoot'im stealin the slipper...Anyhow he put it in his hip pocket. An went back down that road. An there he was a-sittin beside of the road a-tryin to think of somethin to git that steer. What would he do? He done took one in an there was two more to go, if he lived.

An he heared 'im, "Sook buck, saw buck, let's git to town."

He said he just happened to find it. "I'll run out there an set that slipper in the road." An he said, "He'll think somebody's lost it, an the othern be somewhere else." So he shot out and set it in the road an dodged back in the thicket.

An here come the farmer. Shore enough he seed it. Pretty quick, "Sook buck, saw buck, saw, saw, saw, saw." Tied hit to the rope. Got it up. An says, "Boys, there them robbers, 'stead of stealin and robbin they've lost a brand new woman shoe. Looks like it'd just fit my ole lady." An said, "A pair of shoes like that in town would cost three dollars." Said, "I need them shoes." Said, "Gosh,...it's brand new." He said, "Aie gosh, aigra [?], no mate to it." Said, "One's no use." So he throws it back down an took on. "Saw buck, let's get to town."

Jack, he cut through a near cut, went out an got the slipper an cut through a near cut a-runnin hard as he could run to over take him an go ahead of him. An he got ahead of him an set it in front of him agin.

He forgot to get it in his mind which foot it went on. Ye see anybody would. To put that in his mind which foot it went on.

He said, "Oh my gosh," he said, "Hain't I a fool." Said, "There's the mate ta that slipper on here about a mile this away." An said, "Hain't I a fool." Said, "I ort-a of put the othern in my pocket. Well," he said, "them a-bein new an them a-bein worth three dollars." Said, "I know from the way they look they'll fit my ole lady. They're exactly her size." Said, "It's worth goin back." An he tied the ox an went back where he thought he picked up the slipper at. An them a-bein new. They said he run there messed up. "Now right here's where I thought it was at." An he'd run on down a tenth of a mile back that way, an look. An he'd run back up, "Now right there's where I thought it at." An they said he run there till his tongue was a-hangin out. And them bein new an costin three dollars. An when he went back his steer was gone. Jack had done got hit, ye see, an took it on to the robbers.

An so they said, "Well, you brought in another." They paid him fer hit. The three hundred guineas. "Well," they said. Now the leader of the robbers with the gun he put him on that night, he said, "Now, young man," he said, "You just lack one, an we'll let ye live, just to keep your mouth shut." He said, "Just keep your mouth shut, where you've been at."

So he laid that night a-studyin. An he slept a pretty good nap an then wake up, woke up an he'd study agin an go back to sleep. An the night seemed long. An there a night was on the third one, and that 'uld be the loser no doubt, lose the other two all that trouble, an still be killed. If he messed up on that last one that would be rough wouldn't it? So now, "If I lose on that last one, I've done all that other two fer nothin."

Well all he knowd to do that time was go back there an sit side of the road. He had no slipper; he had no rope. He had nothin to his mind that he would get that'un with. What would he do? An he heared the ole farmer a-comin. "Sook buck," on that ridge same, "Sook buck, saw buck let's git to town." An he said, "I have to think of something." In his mind, said, "I have to think of something." It happened, just clicked. An Jack had rabbit-hunted a lot an hunted them kind that lift their feet. He knowed. He says, "I can jump in the woods up there an get him adder [after] me just like they got lose before he had 'em tied." He got up there, "Mow! Mow! Mow! Baw! Baw! Baw!"

An the ole farmer said, "Gosh, just what I'se expected. They just got loose." Says, "I'll get up there an catch 'em an take them all three on today together."

An Jack got him up in there adder 'im. An he'd rabbit-hunted a lot like I said [?] an he'd give 'im a dodge. (Like a rabbit does when it licks his feet, even a dog can't run. Cause I've seen 'em, I know. They can knock a dog off good as they can smell a rabbit, can lick their both feet, all four feet. Lick the hind'uns first, that way, and the front'uns. An then give a thirty-feet jump off of a log or somethin. An that dog will come there, an he can't smell hair nor tail. I've even put the rabbit on would jump the dog and wouldn't smell nothin. An he knowd the rabbit jumped there. Seed it. An that dog couldn't smell no rabbit. Licked it up.)

An so he'd say, "Sook, buck, Sook buck, Sook buck."

An Jack 'uld go, "Mow, baw," an run to another ridge. An he kept on windin that man around there till he got 'im tangled up in a bunch of green briars an locust thorns, an thorn bushes. Thorns that long had 'em stuck through that man in his clothes. Had him tangled up till he couldn't move.

An Jack run out an grabbed the steer loose an took it on to the robbers, an left him tangled up up there in them thickets. An so they paid him off. An he got back in home in two or three days.

An so bein so close an he done such a good job, they give him a thousand. It was just nine hundred, but they boasted it a hundred. An he got back in home an he said, "Now, Dad, take this thousand guineas." (Or call it a thousand dollars.) An said, "Tell that doctor I'm entitled to this girl, to go git the preacher and git the papers ready."

An so Jack's dad took it up to the doctor's home. No, the doctor come down an said to him and Jack's mother, "Where is Jack at?" He said, "He ain't been up to help me work in a, about a week or something."

He said, "Jack has got as independent as you is." He said, "He went off an made a thousand dollars, a thousand guineas in no time. He's got as independent as you is, Doc."

"Well," he say, "you tell 'im," he says, "you tell 'im 'fore he"—they called it courtin, ye know—"before he can court by daughter that he's got to come. You tell Jack that he's got to come to my barn an steal my ridin horse out." An Jack come in then. An Jack just happen to git in then. "Now, Jack, you've got to steal my ridin horse out of the barn, an me with three riders on the other horses a-guardin it an the door locked."

An his mother an dad said, "Jack, you must as well quit." Said, "That can't be done."

He said, "Bedad, I can try, can't I? Like I did the othern." Said, "I want to try everything."

Well, so he went down to the drug store and bought a bottle of chloryphorm. An he went to a bootlegger an got a half a gallon of whiskey. It git chilly up in the night. So he got that whiskey an put it in three bottles. Put some in three bottles and so much chloryphorm to each of 'em, mixed it in with the whiskey. An he went an got 'im an ole coat an put it on like he was a beggar an went an laid beside that barn-like fence.

An so way up in the night Jack got out one of the bottles an made out like he drunk a little out of it. Ye know it was gettin cold, an he set it over next to the fence. An that rider come up an got it. Drunk it. An so Jack got the second bottle, drunk a little out of hit. An the second rider said, "Now that un's mine." Said, "You've got the first 'un; that un's mine." So he drunk it.

Third bottle, third rider said, "Now, you two, that un's mine." The third one, "That un's mine and you'ns got the other one a piece." So he drunk hit. An then in just a few minutes, they all three fell fast asleep on their horse. Jack went in an got the key out of the little one's pocket an unlocked—crawled through under the fence an got the key out an unlocked the barn door. An got the horse out an locked it back an unlocked the barn lock gate an locked hit back with the horse through it. Then piled the three men in a pile 'fore he left. All three asleep. That'll do. An took it on back. An ole Doc, [Jack] told him, "If I do, is it mine?" An so he put it down, his horse, an put it in his dad's barn.

Doc come down next mornin. He said, "Jack, you took my horse last night, didn't cha?"

"No," he said, "I took my horse." He said, "I've got mine in Dad's barn." Said, "I told ye if I take it is it mine? An you said yeah." He said, "It was your horse, but it's mine now." Said, "You said it was mine if I could steal it. I've got it in Dad's barn now."

...Jack's dad went up an told him he had the horse and said, "Now you're goin to let him get your girl for his wife?"

An he said, "I just can't say yet. You tell 'im, says he's too good to steal. You tell him he's got to come in tonight or in the evening, gettin that dark, an steal a rabbit. He's got to steal a rabbit out of the pot a-cookin on the fireplace. And me an my daughter an my wife a-watchin it cook."

Jack's dad said, "Son, you just as well quit. That's impossible." Said, "That can't be done."

He said, "I can try." Well he went out an caught three wild rabbits. He caught a big one, he got one big one. An he happened to catch one middle-size. An he happened to catch a little one. Three rabbits, wild rabbits. An he put 'em in a poke an went up there an all three.

An he'd say, "You'uns watch that rabbit a-cookin. Jack'll have it if ye don't. Keep your eye on the pot. So now let me tell you, keep your eye on the pot. So now let me tell you, keep your eye on the pot." Said, "That's a man, he'll have that rabbit an we won't even see a hair on his head, so won't know he got it." He said, "That's a slick man."

Well Jack turned the little un loose in the yard. And the daughter said, "Gosh, Pap, Mam, there went a little rabbit through the yard."

An he said, "Like I told ye don't mind them in the yard." Said, "Watch that one in the pot, that I got a-cookin." Said, "Watch that one in the pot."

Well, it got settled down where Jack eased up an turned the middle-size one across the porch, let it run on the porch here by the door...And the daughter said, "Gosh, Pap," said, "there went one by the winder on the porch bigger than the others."

He said, "Daughter, I told you, girl, keep your eye on that 'un in the pot. Forgit them rabbits outside. You've seen them with fur on, and I got this one skinned and a-cookin it to eat. We're goin to eat it an make gravy for breakfast."

Jack eased up on the porch, an was right careful to open the door quietly, eased the door open an ducked that big un out in the house. It run through an jumped the daughter's lap. Hit in her lap an [?] and struck her. An she said, "God, Pap, one nearly tore a hole in my dress. A big un come in here."

He said, "Yeah, God, I see hit." He said, "That's twice as big as the one in the pot." Said, "Let's catch it." It went in the kitchen. An they got the ole split broom handle. All three of 'em was down on their all fours, down on their all fours under the ole cupboard a-jabbin. It went under the cupboard. A-jabbin it, tryin to git it out. An Jack come in an got the rabbit an was gone. An they didn't even know hair nor tail who it was and where it went. Only guess at it. Come back in an directly the rabbit jumped out and got away; went out through the door. An they didn't even know hair nor tail who it was and where it went. Only guess at it. Come back in an directly the rabbit jumped out and got away; went out through the door. An they didn't even know the door was open. They thought it was shet. Jack had it open, ye see. Hit run out an got where he said "Aigra [?]," said, "Check the pot." Said, "It ain't no rabbit."

Said, "Aigra, Jack's got it." Said, "That's the reason that door was open. An the rabbit got out of the house." Said, "That's the way it come in." Said, "I even went foolish. He got the rabbit."

...So Jack's dad went up. [Doc] said, "Jack got the rabbit, didn't he?"

He said, "Yeah, he said he had it. He said it's hisn. Said it's my rabbit now, we'll eat it. Finished cookin it an et it." Said, "Are you goin to let him have the girl?"

He said, "No." Said, "You tell im that good as he is he's got to come tonight an steal my wife's shimmy," (something like underwear. A little bit like underwear, the cold of the mountains, ye know). "So to steal my wife's shimmy, me an her in the bed a-sleepin together."

An Jack's dad said, "Now you take the hint, that can't be done."

He said, "Yeah, I can try. It could be done, maybe I could try."

So he went an killed a sheep an got a bladder of blood an made a scarecrow an put his hat on hit. Made a scarecrow an put it on a pole an put his hat on it. An so he went an got to the end of the house, an they was a-sleepin upstairs. An he told him he had to come in with every door locked an steal the wife's shimmy. An them a-sleepin together upstairs, an every door locked. An so Jack went to the end of the house with that scarecrow an hit on that pole an he'd jab it agin the wall. He tied a rock to it so when he turned it loose it'd feel like, go like his body hit it, the weight of hit.

An Doc, he heard it. An he said, "Now, Jack," he said, "I've got my pistol an the moment you break my winder out, I'll shoot ye fer sure." Said, "Don't make me shoot."

An Jack, he'd wham the wall agin. Second time. An the third time he whammed the scarecrow right through his winder. Ka-wham! An the glass fell in the inside. Pa, pa pa pa pow! Shot three times. Through the head. An Jack's hat on. An Jack let it fall, hit the ground an busted that, blood all over.

Laid there awhile. An his wife said, "You killed Jack."

He said, "I think so. I heard his body hit the ground."

Said, "You better go check."

He went out an checked. Seed that blood an come back an said, "Yeah, I killed the rascal." He said, "He's out there. God," he said, "looks like he's had plenty of blood." Said, "God, it's all over his body."

"Well," she said, "you better go git your neighbors an see if you can hide his [?] body. Doc, the law will have you in no time."

Well, he went and got his neighbors an went an dug a grave an hid that ole scarecrow, buried it. An, an he was excited so that when he went out to do that he left every door open, unlocked. An Jack went up an he could change his voice an talk like the doctor or anybody. He talked like he was the doctor an got into bed with her. Laid down. Said, "I'm tired. We got 'im buried." Said, "I think we're shet of the rascal. Oh," he said, "I forgot." He said, "Me not a-paying no attention. I got in the bed with you an got blood all over your shimmy."

She said, "Aie, that don't matter." Said, "Just git up, I've got a clean un layin over there." Thought it was her husband, ye know. An it was Jack changin his voice. Jack got up an got the clean 'un an gave it to her and took off down stairs with the one he wanted. Went on home.

The doctor come in from where they was a-buryin Jack, an he said, "We got 'im. We got 'im buried."

She said, "Wasn't you in here awhile ago?"

He said, "No."

Said, "You come got in the bed with me about an hour ago." An said, "An ye got blood on my shimmy." Said, "An I gotcha to git up, reach a clean one, an then ye run down the stairs an just now come back."

"Oh," he said, "aigra, Jack's got your shimmy." Said, "Oh, my gosh, he's got it." Said, "You give it to him."

"Well," she said, "he talked just like you an got in the bed with me an laid awhile." She said, "He'd buried Jack, got blood on my shimmy." Jack talked just like him, could change his voice.

Well, Jack's dad took it up there. He said, "Now Jack wants to git the daughter."

He said, "Now I just don't know."

Well Jack's dad said, "He said he had proof in his hat that you'd shot 'im. Three bullet holes through his hat. An if you didn't let him have the girl he'd put the law on ye fer shootin him three times through his hat with your pistol." Had three bullet holes in his hat. So that scared him an Jack got his girl, an fer as I know he's a-livin with her yet.

The Cat and the Mouse

It was here in the mountains where they told it, "Cat and the Mouse." It was told down yander at the lower end here at the river, an told here at my grandfather's. Just all of 'em told 'em "Cat and the Mouse," but they all told 'em a little differen...I got hit, I got it through my grandfather Ben an some others down in here on Beech Creek when I was a young boy.

Now the ole way of "Cat and the Mouse" now...Jack, Tom and Will, their dad give 'em a hundred guineas a piece, which that meant a dollar, a dollar a piece. Says, "Now you three go and be gone one year, twelve months. An if you live, see which one has put the most to it, when you get back. So Will and Tom—

Now another way now that they tell it...he give 'em a hundred guineas which was about fifteen or twenty dollars, was the way they told it, and I think that's more right because Will and Tom struck off with theirn to go buy them a suit of clothes and go hunt 'em a girlfriend an git married. They was due to git married, their age. It hit em to leave out just like the creation of the birds and all, everything to get out and built its nest and lay some eggs in it and start raisin young ones. That's the life that God has created here so it would hit them to get on, but Jack was young yet. He was just in his teens, startin in his teens. And so they'd went to a merchandise store and bought them a suit of clothes, an come back in home an cleaned up from where they'd been a-clearin the new grounds an took off to go an see if they could find out, or anywhere, get 'quainted an hunt 'em a girl-friend.

An so Jack didn't want to spend his money. He was a-holdin to it, but anyhow he was sloppin along behind them an like a dog would, like a dog would slip along with you, like I've run 'em back. Jack was slippin along and he got up too close an they caught him, seed him behind 'em an they took a switch an turned it on him an spanked him good. An said, "Now you wouldn't spend your money an git you no clothes an you're too dirty." Said, "You're too dirty and it'll ruin us a huntin us a girlfriend." Said, "They'll ask whose brother it is, and we won't want to tell that you're our brother." Said, "God," said, "it'll ruin us." And they said, "Now you go back."

An the second time he caught up with them agin, an that time they whupped him rougher so it'd force him to go back. An so he stayed back a while longer, and went an the third time he caught up with them agin. An they just said, "Aie!" An happened to think, says, "We're needin a little extry money anyhow." An said, "We'll just kill him. We'll just beat him to death an kill him. He ain't gonna go back now." An said, "We'll just kill him and take his hundred guineas and divide it up, done spent all ourn for clothes and we'll have a little spendin money." So they beat Jack up and throwed his body in a little old haul road where it was water a-seepin down through, kind of a swampy place...a haul road, a loggin road, loggin with yoke of ox, haulin out fire wood. And they throwed rock an moss an mud an pieces of dead limb an all that to fill over his body, to hide it.

And, but Jack a-layin in there in that mud, his healin water brought him back to and he come back to life. His heart was still a beatin enough yet till he come back by bein in that cool mud, water, that was what they used to doctor with for bruises. An so he come back and kept gainin a little strength an he dug out, like a ground hog, dug out from under there, an got out an he was so beat and bruised up. He was bruised, teeth beat out and so he crawled round in the woods and finally got where he healed his mouth under cold water, got his mouth an healed it under cold water. An got that a healin up and his eyes was black. An he doctored that with mud and water and in a few days he got where he could eat a few nuts, got eatin nuts with squirrels in the woods an in about a month he was well, his strength back. He got tryin to find out where he was at an where he would come out at.

An so he was a-walkin that road an he come to where it was three forks, was three road-ways, three intersections, one a-turnin left, one right, and one straight ahead. An he said, "Aie." An he had his cap where they tore it up. It was tore into pieces kinda about that broad. He says, "Aie, I don't known which road to go, and like my luck has always been I'm goin to throw my cap up in the air an go which ever road my cap hits in." An it hit in

the righthand road, come down an hit in the righthand road. "Well," he said, "That's the one I'm goin'." He said, "I don't never throw it twice." He said, "I go with the first throw fer my luck."

An so he walked that and kept walkin it and directly it gin to come in, closin in. An directly he got up agin and where it was growed up full offern bushes an green briars an thicketed till a rabbit could just barely get through it, looked like. So he 'gin to look around an off to the side he got where he could turn his body sideways an squeeze through an go slow an got through, an directly he gin to see an open light a-comin near. A open light, an so he got on out, an there was a clearin an he looked down in the valley and gosh, there was a, was a big rich man's house, a fine house in them woods a just growed all around it, an open where the house was at, opened in there an he said, "Gosh, I don't want to go in there with them rich folks with my clothes tore up like this, where they tore my clothes up. Well," he says, "Aie. I'm gonna go on and check it. I never have missed checkin everywhere I've been."

He went on down to the house, walked up at the front door and rung the door bell. There was an old-timey doorbell a-hangin right side of the door, and he rung that doorbell an he heared nothin, an he rung it again, an the third time he rung it he heared something, he thought, goin "tip, tip, tip, tip, tip" come over the floor. Directly it got, "peck, peck, peck, peck, come on up." An the door opened an there stood a cat, black cat, an spoke and said, "Hello young man." And he said, "Gosh, bedad, I've got to a country where cats is a-talkin, black cats is a-talkin." Well, he says, "What is your trouble?"

"Well," the cat said, "well," said, "there was a witch caught me and my two sisters," and said, "witched them into a mouse yesterday." Said, "She first witches you into the cat, and then if nobody can't break the enchantment, she's gonna witch me into a mouse tonight." An said, "Could you maybe help me?" Said, "If you could maybe take it over now and break ever' plague that she puts agin ye, you can whoop me out, pull me out of this." An said, "If you don't you'll be with us." Said, "Now that's up to you." Said, "You'll be with us if you fail in e'ry one of her plagues that she puts agin ye to do."

Well, he 'gin to look and where the cat's claw nails was suppose ta be was a beautiful girl's fingernails, was a little left yet. He didn't say nothin, but he seed that the cat didn't have no real claws like a real cat on her fingernails. "Well," he says, "what must I do to do that?"

"Well," the cat said, said, "Well, you—tonight she'll send all kinds of big animals like elephants an big horses and cows and all sorts of big animals." Said, "You'll have to sit in the doorway here an not let nary'n get across in the house through the door." Said, "If you do you'll be witched too."

An so Jack went on out an et him a few berries an nuts, an hewed in a great big—fixed him out a great big club that day. That night come it got dark and here come them big elephants and all them big animals, and he beat an thrashed an the sweat would pour an you'd think one of 'em would beg by him in spite of him, but he throwed that club around him and knocked all night and was just nearly give out. An directly he seen it was gettin daylight an he was a-hopin so. He thought the whole yard would be full of them animals but when daylight come there wasn't an animal left, not one thing.

An so the cat come out and spoke an she said, "Good work, good work, young man." And she was up to here, had a beautiful girl's hand. Said, "Now tonight she'll send all sorts of animals like possums, pole cats, ground hogs, coons, foxes, bobcats, and all that sort of animals."

An Jack went out that day and hunted him up some more food and hewed out a middle-sized club. An dark come an he got in that doorway, an gosh here they come just a pourin through wurser than the others. He beat and thrashed. Directly come daylight and there wadn't a one of 'em in the yard, but the cat come out an spoke. An she was a girl up to her elbow, an up to her knees and her feet, beautiful girl. Said, "Now you're a-doin fine." Said, "Just keep the good work a-goin. Just keep the good work a-goin." So she says, "Now tonight she'll send all sorts of flies."

An Jack went out an eat him some food and hewed him out a paddle for them flies. An so dark come and here come them flies a-goin “zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz,” them big blow flies, “zzzzzzzzzzzz” that way, an tryin to dart around ’im. An he’d bat ’em with that paddle an daylight come, an there wasn’t no flies in the yard. An the cat come out an she’s up to here, to here was her leg, the girl was. An said, “Now tonight,” said, “she’ll send all sorts of stinging bees.” Said, “It’s a-getting wurser all the time.” ...An so Jack went out an hewed him another paddle an fixed it for them bees. An she said, “Now they’ll sting. It’ll be awful.” Said, “You’ll have to watch. Some of them could knock your mind out.”

So he got in the doorway an them started, hornets, yellow jackets, black jackets, honey bees and ever kind of stingin bee there was was a-comin. An so he beat there all night a-knockin them bees and them a-stingin him. He was swelled up bad next mornin, but he was still a-goin. Wadn't none of them in the yard, and the cat come out an she was just nearly a full beautiful girl. Her hair hanging down, black, shiny, jet hair, and a beautiful girl. An so, she says, "Now you're through with all her plagues. Now tonight, this evenin, this evenin or afternoon, you'll have to go through the ole witch in person." Said, "You'll be with her in person. Now one thing about it," said, "don't let her do one thing fer ye, not one thing." Said, "If you do, you're gone with."

So Jack got in the house an was a-buildin a fire in the fireplace an was—got him a wooden needle—an was sewin up his cap an his clothes where Will and Tom tore 'em up. The witch come in, said, “Let me sew that fer ye.” Said, “It always looked the awkerdest to me to see a man try to sew.”

“Well,” Jack said, “it might look awkerd but,” said, “I do my own sewin.” Said, “You keep away from me.” Said, “You keep away from me.” An so directly Jack started to fixin some eatin. There was some eatin in there, some eatin in the kitchen, fryin him some meat, fixin him some supper in the frying pan on the fire.

An the witch spoke. Said, "It always look the awkerdest for me to see a man try to cook. Let me fix your supper fer ye."

He said, "Now like I told you," said, "you mind your own business." Said, "I cook my own supper myself." An so while he was fixin his supper, she eased through to the left of 'im an come in one of gettin her hand in the pan. So he'd a-had it. There's an ole big toastin fork standin there, that they'd used, an he soused that through in her, an hid her behind the back log, an said that beat any poppin an crackin you'd ever heared in your life.

An so she (the girl) come out an she was a full human being. An so when he got outside and looked around it would been a farm witched. Its crops a-growin. It been witched when there was cabbage, an was a ranch on it, a horse ranch, sheep, cattle, an they was out there pickin. An all that thorns an everthing was gone, was all of it beautiful pasture ground and meaders, around a hundred acres of it, that house on it. So he got back an the girl come out an said, "Now, Jack," said, "how did it look?" Said, "It's yours."

He said, "Be-dad, hit suits me fine."

An she said, "Do you want me to boot?"

He said, "Yeah, boy." An they went an got a preacher, went an hunted a preacher up an got married. An Jack started workin on the farm doin, fixin the fence an seein to the livestock an the chickens. There was chickens all layin eggs.

So finally it went on an one day, Jack had just about forgot an he come in. He said, "Honey," and "Sugar, I about to forget. I about to forget." Said, "Tomorrow I've got to be at home." Said, "Tomorrow will be twelve months." Said, "My dad give me an my two brothers a hundred guineas apiece, an they beat me up and put me for dead an took mine." Said, "I've got to be at home tomorrow, tomorrow evenin sometime, afternoon."

So they got a buggy an big fine horses, an the harness was in the barn. An they got the buggy an went an bought her a fine dress an clothes, an him a suit of clothes an one of those high topped blacked hats. An so they took off, an they got just beyond the log barn, their dad's log barn, above it, an Jack said, "Now you wait here an mind the horse." An said, "I'll go on in in my old clothes now, put my old clothes on an go home in them." An she told 'im all right.

So he went on down an jumped the fence, the pole fence in at the barn. Jack's dad seen him an run out. Said, "Hold it, Jack. Hold it, Jack." Said, "You must didn't do no good in twelve months. Will an Tom came in yesterday an had a woman a piece." Said, "They come in day fore yesterday." An said, "Gosh, you wouldn't want to be seen a-lookin like that among them."

So Jack just went around like he wadn't, went around, jumped the fence and went on to the house anyhow an got there. His mother hugged him an got on him there, an Will an Tom. He sat down an directly they 'gin to pin things to his back, an pat their hands and laugh, dish rags an stuff like that. An Jack would just sit like it was nothin to him. Directly about an hour he just got up an left out. He went back out where his wife was, an he put his clothes back on an that big ten-gallon black top hat, an got in that buggy a-comin off that hill.

Will looked out, an he said, "Gosh, come here." Said, "Look yonder, two rich folks a-comin." He said, "Gosh."

Will's wife said, "Where can I hide at?"

Will said, "You can hide hind the door with that calico dress on."

So Tom's wife said, "Tom, where will I hide at?"

An Tom said, "You run under the floor." Said, "I wouldn't want them to see you."

She said, "I'll hide."

Jack got on in an helped his wife off the buggy an got her on up an introduced her to his mother, an his dad was still out to the barn a-feedin. So she set down an directly Jack's wife said, "Will, Jack told me that you was married." Said "Where's your wife?"

Said, "Mine's behind the door." An she come out.

Said, "Tom," said, "where's your wife?"

Said, "Mine's under the floor." She come out with chicken feathers an chicken manure in her hair, an all over an the sheep had laid under there.

An so directly his dad come in, an he introduced his wife to him. Jack says, "Now, Mother an Dad," he said, "I'll tell you'ns something if you'ns can believe me. Now they beat me up fer dead an thought they'd killed me an took my hundred guineas." An said, "I went on an whupped out a witchcraft an got my wife." Said, "I've got a farm," an said, "I'm wealthy." Said, "I'm a wealthy young man now." An said, "You'ns ever gets disabled if I'm a-leavin ye, me an my wife, you'ns come on if you need me to help take care of you'ns. An so the last time that I seed Jack, he was still there runnin that ranch."

Lucky and Unlucky Jack

"*Lucky Jack and Unlucky Jack.*" That's the way I always heared it told. But they got it headed up any more *Big Jack and Little Jack*, the way they've got it, ye know. The way I always heared it told was *Lucky Jack and Unlucky Jack*...

Well now, this'n here's about Lucky Jack and Unlucky Jack now, if I can git it told. Now Unlucky Jack he, he was a , he was easy to lose out.... Now Lucky Jack he was slow and sharp...He didn't build fast and git carried away. (Ye know you can build fast with somebody tellin ye about a good bunch of money. An build ye up, ye know, or just anything an lead ye off and it winds out to nothin and ye got the heals of it...got ye out there and ye went fer the bad. That's unlucky. Ye see you went with the wrong luck, with the wrong people, carried away.)

So Unlucky Jack he said he was gonna take off. An another'n had told him, had built him up that there was a man out yonder that he could go hire out to herd sheep and make a, make a good easy bunch of money, to herd fer that feller. So he took out to hunt him up. An so he finally got there an asked him. He said, "Yeah, I always is a needin a man to herd sheep." But that was the reason. He always needed one because he wasn't a-treatin them right. And so he was out sharpin them. And Unlucky Jack he was always fast to grab and

not git nothin fixed up right. An, an so he said, "Well, we'll sign a contract." An he wrote out a contract and Unlucky Jack signed it, but he didn't git it read good. He was so high to git out fast to make money he didn't—he'd trust in the man that he wouldn't do him wrong. (An I've always been like that. I've found out any more and learned I can't trust everybody like I did. I hoped they all felt like I did, but, but Unlucky Jack he's learned it out of that too.) He thought that everybody felt like he did. An so he signed it. But he went on an took—he counted the sheep out, a hundred head. And he went on a-herdin 'em all day an comin in late in the night and counted 'em back in. An said, "A good job, Jack." Now this is Unlucky Jack. "Jack, it's a good job." Said, "You ain't lost a one. A hundred head back in."

An his wife said, "Jack, your bed's ready." Never mentioned no food. An they fixed it in the contract the first 'un that got mad the other'n was to take enough hide out of his back to make a pair of shoe strings an pour salt in the gash. An so next mornin he hollered him out of bed, said, "Jack, your sheep's ready." Never made no breakfast. An there was supper an breakfast done gone an nothin to eat. Well he et a few berries, messed around, herded the sheep that day. Brought 'em in, he counted 'em in. Said, "Boy, you're the best sheep herder I've hired in a long time." Said, "Here is on the third day you ain't lost none."

So she said, "Your bed's ready, Jack." An he went to bed then.

Took 'em out the fourth day. Hollered, "Sheep was ready." An no breakfast. An the fourth day he come in that night.

Next mornin was the fifth mornin. An he said, "Jack, your sheep's ready."

He said, "Ain'tcha goin to give me nothin to eat?"

"Well," he said, "let's look at the contract." Looked at the contract an he'd signed it, an it didn't say give him nothin to eat. "Well," he said, "Jack, are you mad?"

He said, "Yeah, I'm mad an good an mad."

An so they went in to it, an the man whooped 'im an got'm down over a barrel. Bend'm over a barrel an took the knife an cut out a strip in each side fer two shoe strings. An then poured salt in the gashes. An so he drugged off in the laurel thicket an was a-bleedin bad when he went in there. An Lucky Jack he was out walkin around an goin an happen to run on this blood. An he 'gin to track it to see. He smelt of it an he said, "It's human blood." An said, "I wonder what happened." Said, "There's somebody hurt bad." And he tracked it, kept trackin it. An he finally got down in that thicket, down in there. An there lay Unlucky Jack unconscious. He was alive yet. An so he 'gin to mess with him. An got him up an washed him with water, doctored him some. Got'im to where he was mumblin an got 'im to tellin who had done that. Was a sheep herder, hired people to herd sheep. So he took Jack on to the nearest place where they doctored people. He said, "Now, Doc, I ain't got no money now. But," he said, "you cure this feller if you can an hem him up, an I'll pay ye soon as I can."

An so he told 'im he would an he left Unlucky Jack there. An he went on, inquired a-huntin a job or inquirin where he could find a job to herd sheep. An the people he would meet would tell him. An so finally he got there. He could see him a-comin, this man did who had the sheep to herd. An told his wife, "Yon a-comes another sucker, yon a-comes another sucker. Nother sucker a-comin. We've got another sucker a-comin."

An so, Lucky Jack got on up and said, "Hey, hello there."

Said, "Hello." Said, "Are ye wantin a job?"

Said, "Yeah, ye got one?"

Said, "Yeah, I've got a job." Said, "To hire men to herd a hundred head of sheep." He said, "Do you want it?"

He said, "Yeah. I'll take ye right up."

An so he fixed a contract. Lucky Jack just knowed all about it. But he just up and signed it quick. He just signed it, what it said anything to eat or not.

An so he said, "Your bed's ready." And they never offered him no supper. Next mornin, hollered an said, "The sheep's ready." Never offered him no breakfast.

So he went that day an herd them an come in. An he counted 'em an said, "Oh, you've lost one, ain'tcha?"

He said, "Yeah, I lost one." Jack had killed one and et all he wanted out of its ham, an left all the rest fer the coyotes an the animals to eat.

An so said, "Your bed's ready." An Jack watched that time. He knowd it'd be better, the meat would, to have a little salt an bread. An so he, ere he went to bed, he slipped down through in the kitchen an got some salt and a pone of bread was left over an took it back up. Fixed it up where his bed was at.

An next mornin hollered, said, "Get up Jack, your sheep's ready."

And he said, "Okay, on my way."

He took the longest till he got to the pasture. He knocked another good, another good ewe in the head, a good fat un. Built 'im a fire an broiled that ham, the lean of it. An gosh that was good. (I like sheep meat too, the lean. I like the lean of the mutton.)

So Jack, gosh, that corn bread. He et a real breakfast then, an left the rest of that for the coyotes an animals to eat. Give them somethin where they was hungry. Went in. That left, that left 98.

"Oh," he said, "You've lost another."

"Well," Jack said, "Ye mad?"

He said, "No."

Lucky Jack says, "Ye mad?"

He said, "No." Said, "Ah, two ain't bad." Directly said, "Your bed's ready now."

An he slipped down ere they got to sleep and got 'im some more salt.

That was the third day and he hollered, "The sheep's ready."

An he went out, got to the pasture and he knocked the third'un in the head. He et a good breakfast, broiled it. Left the rest fer the coyotes an the hungry ones, the animals to eat.

Got back, said, "Oh, you've lost another." Said, "That leaves 97."

Said, "You're losin one a day, Jack. Well," he said, "your bed's ready."

Next mornin he hollered up, "Get up Jack." An Jack got up. He said, "Maybe you'd be better, eh, plowin." Said, "I believe I'll just hire ye to plow. Need some plowin started." Said, "Ye ever plow?"

He said, "Oh, gosh," he said, "I've plowed."

So he put him out in a big field with a big fine team of horses. An Jack ere he left, he just loosened the bridle rings. Lucky Jack just loosened the bridle rings an just plowed in that pretty field just whichever the horses picked. An that would be any lookin way. An he come back an he said, "Jack, that ain't the way ye plow."

"Well," he said, "that's the way we always plowed. It's a good way."

An he said, "No." Started him in, an he went back in.

An about that, it wasn't long ere, here come by a little ole fella on a donkey. An Jack hollered out, stopped the horse and hollered out, Lucky Jack did. Said, "Hey, there," said, "boy, I'd like to swap one of these horses fer your donkey."

He said, "You makin fun of my donkey?"

"Oh," Lucky Jack said, "no." Said, "I just want that thing."

"Oh," he said, "well if you want it," he said, "I'd swap."

So got out there and Jack got them there harness, or put the saddle off the donkey on that ole horse an had to piece the gird with a piece of hickory bark. An when he put the harness offa that big horse on that donkey to put the saddle on, the britchen of the harness drug way down under its feet, it was so big a harness. An so every time he'd call, "Pull!" that big horse 'uld jerk that donkey an smack its face right in its butt. Every time he'd come back with that face right in its butt seesawing. An so directly Jack, Lucky Jack flew mad. An he said, "Ah, that won't do." He just went around with a swingle tree an knocked the donkey in the head, killed it. An hooked the big horse to it. Was left draggin it out, wearin its body out over the ground, a-hurrin down knockin all that rough down where he'd plowed already what he'd plowed. An about that time the man come. He said, "God, Jack," he said, "what are you a-doin?" He said, "Where's my horse?"

"Oh," he said, "I thought you'd like it." He said, "This little ole feller went by with a donkey." Said, "I swapped 'im fer it." An he said, "It couldn't pull." An he said, "I flew mad and knocked it in the head with a swingle tree, an dragged it out over the field." He said, "Are you mad?"

"Oh," he said, "no, I ain't mad. But," he said, "maybe you'd be better pickin apples." He said, "I've got some apples need pickin."

"Oh," he said, "yeah, I'm an awful apple picker."

An so he took him an started him pickin apples. An Jack went back to the house and got the ax an cut down three trees while the man was gone.

He came back, and he said, "God, Jack, what are you a doin?"

"Oh," he said, "that's the way I always pick." Says, "It's easier to cut the trees down to pick the apples." Says, "Easier than climbin up the ole ladder you give me."

"Oh," he said, "Jack, gosh," he says, "I won't have none another year." He said, "Ye cut all my trees down. Oh," he said, "you just didn't understand." Said, "Let me take the ladder and show you how to pick apples." An so he climbed up to pick, and Jack just jerked the ladder out from under him when his hand was on a limb and there he hung. "Oh," he said, "Jack, put the ladder back." Said, "Gosh, put the ladder back."

He said, "I'll put it back whenever you holler an tell your wife to fix me something to eat."

He hollered as hard as he could. So Jack, Lucky Jack, run down there an she hollered back. She says to Jack, "What's he tryin to tell me?"

He said, "He said, fer, he's a sayin fer you to kiss me."

She hollered up to him, said, "I ain't a-goin to do it."

He said, "You do it or I'll kill ye if I live to get down from here."

Well, she smacked Jack a kiss on the cheek, an Jack run back an put the ladder under him and let 'im down. He was about ready to fall. His grip was just about done. So he got down to the house, and his wife said, "Gosh, you devil you." Said, "You made me do something I'd never done in my life."

He said, "What did ye do?"

Said, "He told me you were a-sayin for me to kiss Jack."

He said, "Jack, oh my gosh, you've lied to my wife an got her to kiss ye an I wouldn't have that done." He clinched Jack, Lucky Jack. An they went into—An Jack was awfa quick, Lucky Jack was. But the man was so big, he was just about to git him, but Jack outwinded him an got him over the barra an cut enough hide off that man's back to make a pair of shoe strings. An so he went back by with the pay he'd got. He got the pay out of it. Or he told 'im he'd just finish him on out. An he went back by and paid the doctor. Unlucky Jack was just about well. An he paid the doctor and got out a little walkin where they went away from one another when they was a-partin at the end of the way, 'fore Unlucky Jack went to his home an Lucky Jack went to his home. Lucky Jack said, "Oh wait a minute, Unlucky Jack." Said, "I'm forgettin something."

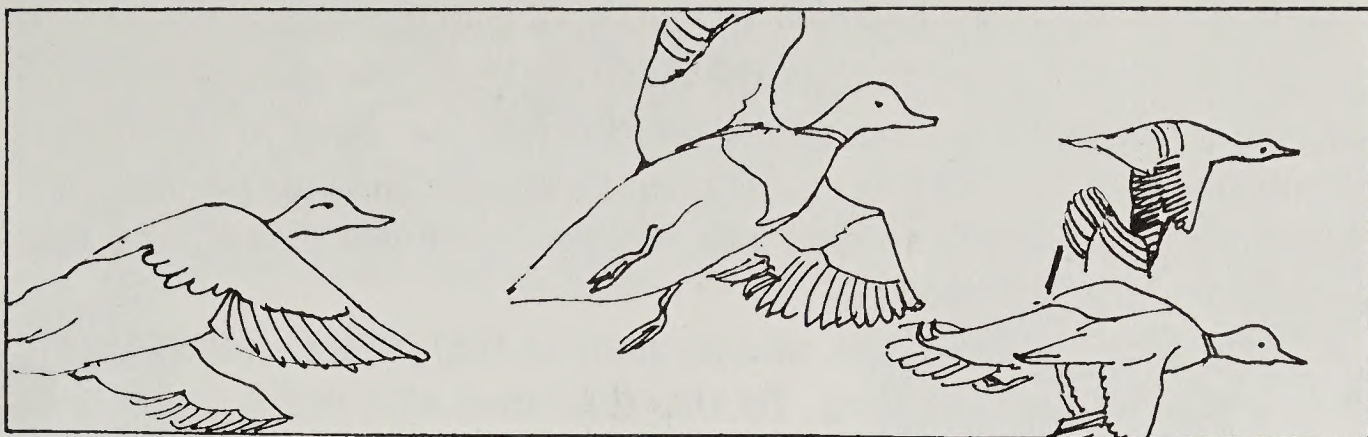
Said, "What is it?"

"Hold it a minute." Reached in his pocket. Said, "Here is your shoe strings back that I got out of his back." Said, "They pay fer the ones he had."

An so fer as I know Lucky Jack is a-cuttin shoe strings yet.

Comments made by Ray

Now that's the way I always heard hit...Now they call it "luck." They call it, hit looks like in life some people is luckier than others. But I think it's just their wit, that they know more how to go at it. That it ain't no luck or nothin. It's just the way they watch an how they go at it....So that's a tale now that I don't think Jack done no wrong. He was just a-gettin even. I mean Lucky Jack didn't do no wrong. He was just a-gettin even from what had been done to Unlucky Jack....An that's a-goin on yet.



Why Do Duck Decoys Have Eyes?

by John Forrest

In 1978 I was involved in a year-long anthropological study of the swamplands of northeastern North Carolina. I was interviewing Amos White,* a retired waterman, when we were interrupted by a visitor whom I did not know and whose appearance was not greeted with any enthusiasm by Mr. White. The caller exchanged pleasantries with us for a while and then asked Amos if he had any old decoys for sale. Amos directed him toward the barn, saying that he believed there were some decoys in there if he cared to look for them. We continued with our chat and about half an hour later he returned carrying two battered decoys. He offered Amos ten dollars for the pair and left. Amos explained to me that the man was an antique dealer from a city in Virginia who periodically stopped by looking for a bargain. However, Amos, who is a hoarder of junk, memorabilia, and antiques, had no intention of parting with any object that had the remotest value. Each winter, he told me, he makes a few "antique" decoys and leaves them in the barn for the dealers to discover. As it happens, he has nearly five hundred genuine antique decoys, but he keeps these carefully hidden where no prying eyes will accidentally spot them. These decoys are not for museums or mantel shelves: they are working decoys.

Amos resents the general belief among collectors that country folk do not know the value of their possessions. The collectors claim that decoys are aesthetic objects that are best preserved in glass cases so that their visual qualities can be appreciated fully. It may come as a shock to them to learn that Amos also thinks of his decoys as aesthetic objects, yet he feels that their aesthetic qualities are best displayed when they are floating in the water in front of a duck blind. For Amos and others in the North Carolina coastal swamplands, duck hunting is primarily an aesthetic act. The pragmatics of shooting ducks are minor in comparison with the elaborate aesthetic trappings which accompany the act.

*Names of persons and places have been changed.

In Potuck, the town where Amos lives, a man who does not hunt is considered an oddity. Hunting is the pride of the region and has been for well over a century. One local duck hunting club has been in continuous operation since 1850. However, for most local men hunting was not truly a sport until 1917. Prior to that date market hunting was legal and men hunted primarily for profit.

By late October most talk among men at the general store in town revolves around duck hunting. By this time men also begin to get their hunting equipment in order and their blinds in shape for hunting. The latter may mean repairing weather damage or simply adding a fresh shroud of cut pine saplings.

On rough days when working on blinds is difficult or dangerous, the hunter turns his attention to his decoys. Because local hunters still use old hand-carved juniper decoys for all or part of their "rig" (that is, set of decoys), one of the rainy day chores is to touch up their paintwork. In some cases the paintwork is quite elaborate, involving careful painting of eyes, nostrils, and tail feathers. This is all done despite the fact that all of the hunters whom I interviewed believed that a decoy does not have to be lifelike in order to attract ducks. The following statement is typical:

You could paint every one of them a greyish-black, every one of them a greyish-black, and put no other color on 'em, and I swear I believe stuff'd come to 'em just as good. Doesn't make no difference. I've took cow manure—it was cold and dry—in the winter time, and set 'em out on the edge of the ice, and had just as good shooting as I ever had in my life.

Older hunters also told me of the practice called "turking out." This involved making decoys by placing duck-sized pieces of turf in the clefts of forked sticks and driving them into the marsh around the blind. Today rough decoys for snow geese are made by filling white trash pail liners with dirt. Thus, the careful painting of old decoys is somewhat puzzling.

Most early local carvers took some pains to make their decoys resemble ducks, but given that the market hunters had to keep a rig of anywhere from two to five hundred decoys in working condition, the carver could not spend too much time on any one decoy. One of these carvers' decoys was described to me as follows:

He made the roughest, outlandish decoys there was made in this county, I believe. But ducks would come to 'em. He could kill ducks with 'em. He just knocked the corners of a block of wood and rounded up a little bit, and nailed a head on it. And it didn't make any difference what size head it was.

Despite the fact that "ducks would come to 'em" this hunter added, "I've got a few of his decoys here and I expect to work 'em over with a spokeshave [drawknife] and make 'em a decent decoy." In other words, a "decent" decoy is not one that attracts ducks, but one that looks good to the hunter.

Almost all of the wooden decoys still in use are painted to resemble one of three species: canvasback, redhead, or widgeon. During the market gunning days canvasback and redhead were prime ducks, fetch-

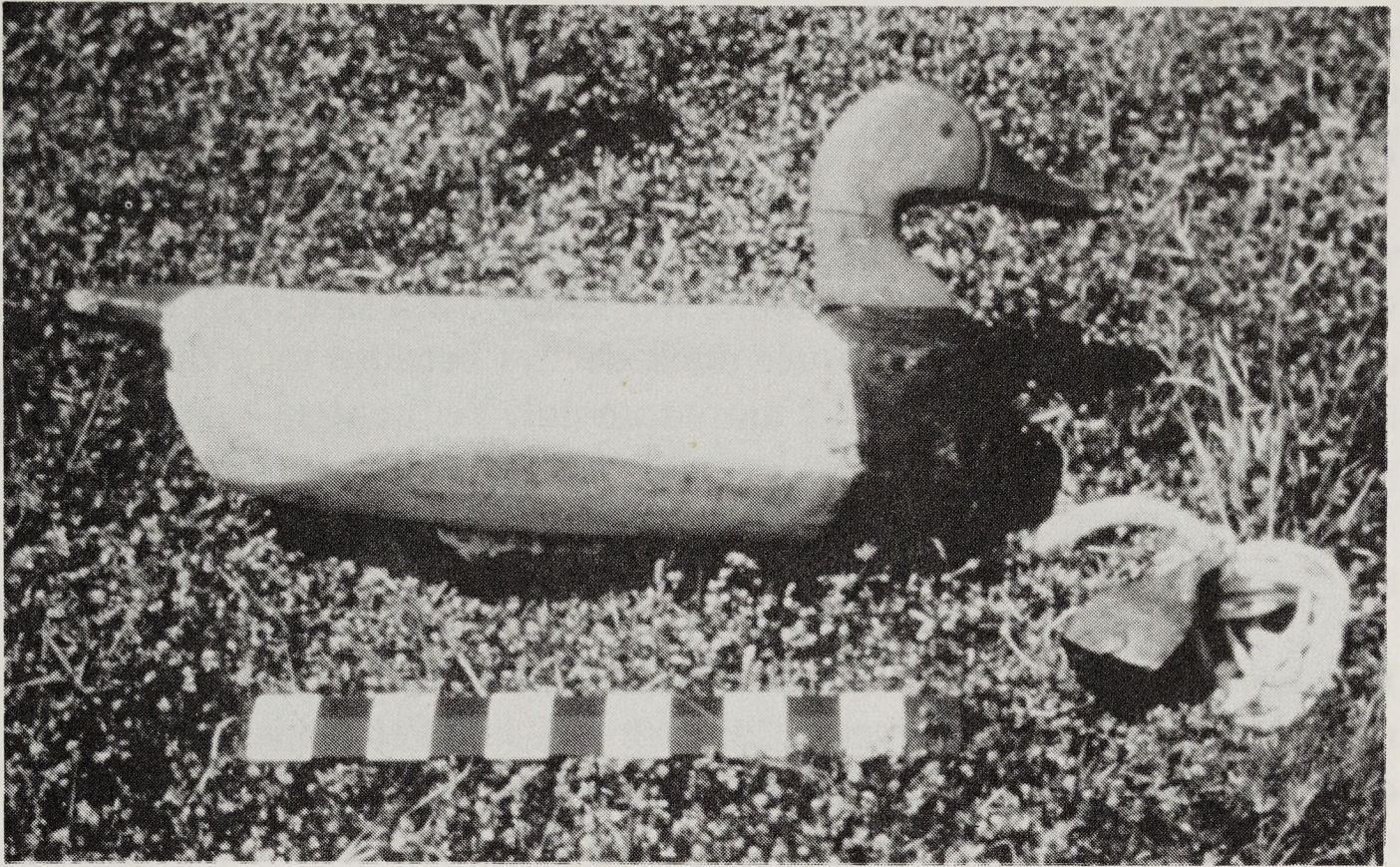


Fig. 1. A wooden canvasback decoy.

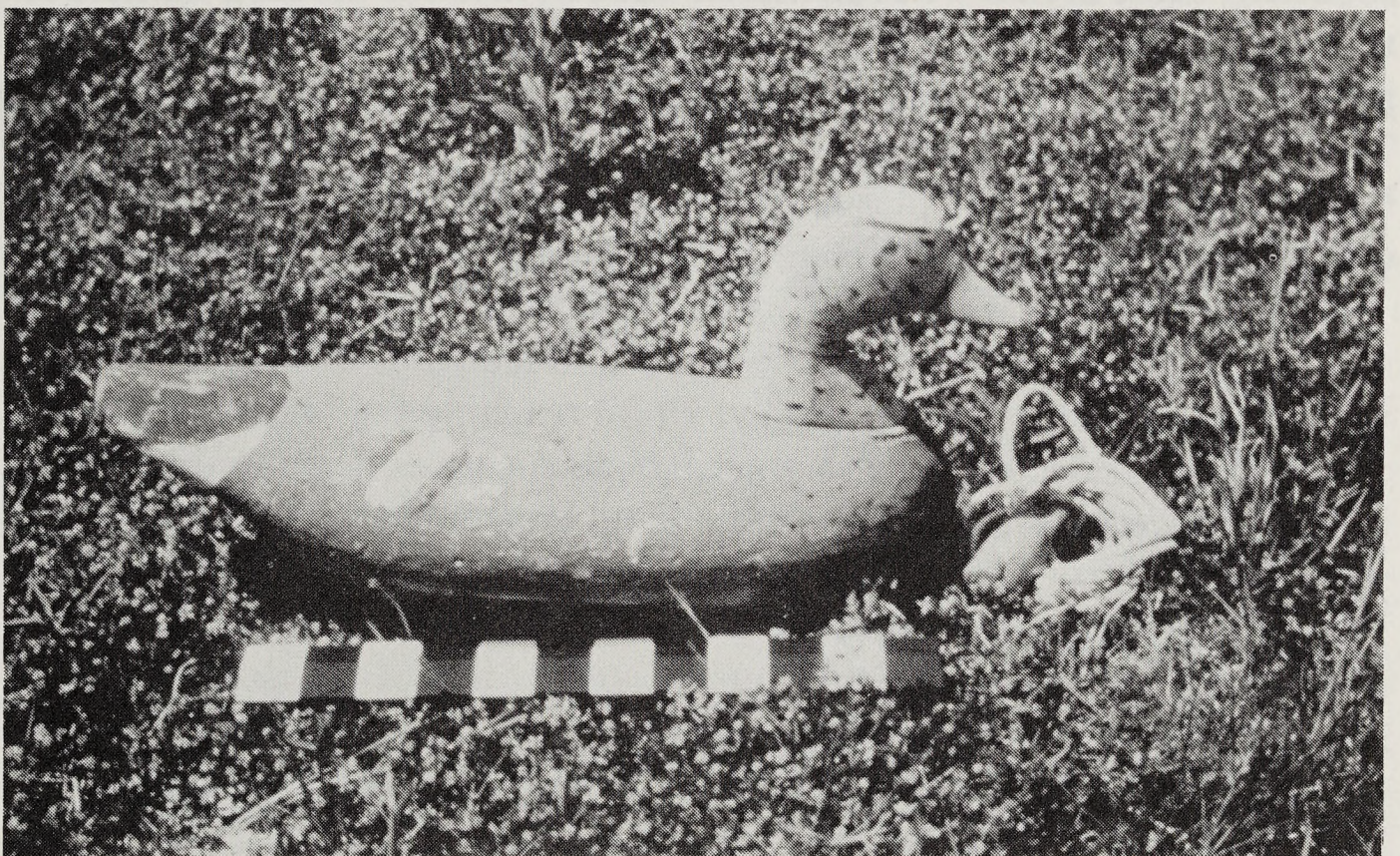


Fig. 2. A wooden widgeon decoy.

ing up to seven dollars per pair. It takes little artistry to paint a decoy to resemble roughly a canvasback or redhead. A canvasback decoy, for example, is painted with a white body; black bill, breast, and tail; and red head. Even though it is now illegal to shoot canvasback because of the carnage wrought on them by the market hunters, decoys of these species are still very common. Widgeon decoys are far less common, but given the difficulty of painting one, it is surprising that any were made at all. The head is grey with a black speckled pattern on the sides and picked out in green and white on top. Various feather configurations are marked on the tail and wings in green, black, and white, and the body

plumage shades from greyish brown on top to white underneath. Given also that gunners believe that a lump of grey wood will attract ducks, the painting is surprising.

Market and early sport gunners did not use goose decoys because they were cumbersome and the long neck was easily broken. Modern hunters, when hunting on freshwater sounds, frequently use a small raft of goose decoys in conjunction with their duck decoys because they think that they make the whole scene look more tranquil. Yet hunters have also explained to me that flying ducks cannot distinguish one species of decoy from another until they are within firing range. Again the decision to use goose decoys at all appears to be an aesthetic one.

Most modern hunters have some plastic decoys in their collections. Hunters who wish to hunt in marsh ponds buy a few plastic mallard and ringneck decoys for use there. Canvasbacks and redheads do not frequent marsh ponds, and the hunters feel that the traditional type of local decoy looks unnatural in this setting. The market hunters had little use for marsh duck decoys since they hunted exclusively on the sounds. Consequently there are no wooden marsh duck decoys for modern hunters to use. Modern hunters have no overriding objections to using rubber or plastic decoys. They are light, do not need painting, and look realistic. They have only one drawback: an errant load of number five shot fired broadside into a raft of plastic decoys will do a lot of damage. Wooden decoys are not especially affected by such treatment.

A hunting party will set out for the blind about thirty minutes before sunrise, so that the hunters can be set up and ready at sunrise, the time at which one can start hunting legally. Upon reaching the blind the hunters throw out their decoys. Each hunter has his own theories about the positioning of decoys in rafts, but most end up bunching them in front of the shooting platform of the blind, with goose decoys, if used, rafted upwind from the ducks. Most hunters are aware of supposedly "scientific" placements of decoys. Each hunter owns books or subscribes to magazines that deal with how to create a lifelike setting that will bring ducks down. However, none I know bothered with them. Placing decoys is difficult and time consuming. At the end of a day's hunt, picking up the decoys can be a cold and miserable affair that is best done as quickly as possible. This means that there is no time to stow the decoys in order, and also means that on the next day the decoys cannot be placed in the same order on the water. Although the hunters might prefer, aesthetically, to have the decoys look as real as possible in shape, coloration, *and* placement, the latter has to be forgone for pragmatic reasons.

After setting out the decoys, the hunters stow their boat and get themselves set up in the blind. Normally two men hunt together for sport, but most blinds can comfortably accommodate three (fortunately for stray folklorists). Men who hunt together are always fast friends who

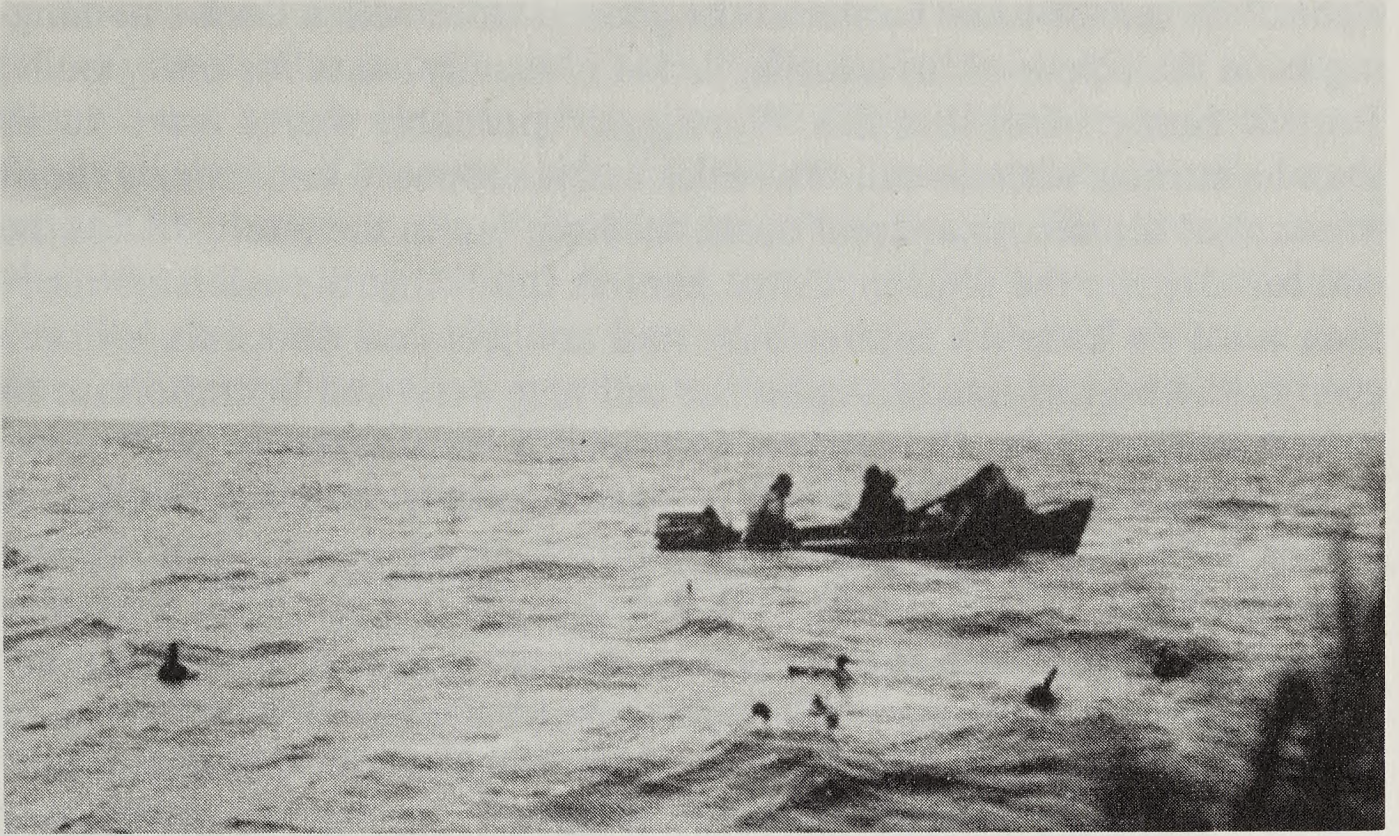


Fig. 3. Setting out a raft of decoys.



Fig. 4. A raft of wooden decoys.

enjoy each other's company as much as the hunting itself. During slack times they exchange stories about great hunting days in past seasons, about how far they can shoot, and so on. All the time, however, they keep a wary eye on the horizon.

When a flock that is legal to shoot is sighted, the hunter may use calls to lure it closer. Whether or not to use calls is a subject of controversy locally, so general observations are hard to make. Most hunters consider that if one is not an expert on the duck call, it is best left at home. The

sight of an out-of-town hunter at the general store with a duck call hanging from the zipper of his hunting jacket is usually cause for a wry smile. Potuck hunters feel that this "foreigner" probably scares more ducks than he attracts with his call. The duck call is supposed to complete the illusion that the decoys are real ducks feeding, but in the wrong hands the call can destroy the illusion. Some hunters think that the call is no more than a toy to keep the hunter busy and are skeptical about its efficacy even in the best of hands. Again the call may very well be important to create an illusion for the hunters and not for the ducks.

If a group of ducks looks as if it is getting ready to decoy, the hunter gives a few greeting calls—a loud qu-a-quack-quack-quack—followed by a feeding noise—a low jumbled k-k-k-k quacking. This sound is hard to produce on a call, and the hunters practice it a good deal. During my fieldwork year a young hunter discovered a special call labeled a "Scotch" duck call. It is basically a regular duck call but has a long rubber concertinalike bellows attached. Wagging the bellows produces a very lifelike feeding noise. The call created quite a stir at the general store, but it remained the only one in town.

After this elaborate hunting stage has been set, it remains only for the ducks to fly within firing range of the hunters. When they do the hunters, on a pre-arranged signal, stand up from their cover and open fire. This process obeys certain rigidly prescribed rules:

- Never shoot at a duck that has alighted on the water.
- Never shoot a duck that will not be eaten.
- Never shoot at a large (five or more) flock of ducks.
- Never take a low percentage shot.

This act is repeated many times until the men shoot their limit, or they get tired, or the sun goes down.

A neophyte might be forgiven for thinking that these men believe that a lifelike scene around their blinds is what brings ducks to them. As we have seen this is not true, or at least is by no means the whole truth. The counterarguments are summarized as follows:

1. They believe that rough, uncolored blocks of wood will decoy ducks.
2. They throw decoys into the water in random bunches.
3. They are skeptical of duck calls.

There is one major reason why ducks come to the blinds, and that reason is not mysterious. Every hunter baits his blind with corn. Some hunters spread as much as fifty to a hundred pounds of corn per day in front of their blinds at the start of the hunting season. It is not lawful to do this, and for good reason. A baited blind invariably attracts vast numbers of ducks, and every hunter knows this. Thus, it is difficult not to view decoys, calls, and so forth as minor hunting accessories when it comes to the business of luring ducks. They must, therefore, be primarily of aesthetic value.

The final act of hunting takes place at night. The hunters gather at the general store after supper and recount the day's events to one another. Men do not openly brag in general public about their hunting prowess, although they will recount their misfortunes unashamedly. One's hunting partner, however, may tell of his mate's successes. This is one reason why men never hunt alone. A lone hunter might have a great day's shooting, but then is forbidden from telling of it. I should also add that there are tricks that allow hunters to brag without appearing to do so. One preferred mode is to talk of one's own skills at the expense of a universally despised group—Yankees. The following tale is typical:

I remember once guiding for this Yankee. All day he kept missing. He couldn't hit a bull in the ass with a spade. All day he kept cussin' his gun and saying he'd take it to be looked at as soon as he got back home. In the end I said, "Let me see that gun." Three boobies [ruddy ducks] come by and I knocked 'em down—one-two-three. "Well," he said, "I guess it ain't the gun."

This story is ostensibly about how poor Yankees are at shooting. It veils the teller's bragging that he can shoot three birds with three shots.

The swamps, marshes, and freshwater sounds not only provide sport for the hunters but also their livelihood. Most of them work full-time or part-time as commercial fishermen. They fish in the winter months for rockfish, mullet, carp, shad, and other local species and in the summer for crab, eel, and catfish. The fishermen work alone or in pairs, sometimes from sunrise to sunset, six days a week when the fishing is good. What is both obvious and curious about this commercial fishing is that it is almost entirely devoid of aesthetic forms. For example, in the entire year I spent in Potuck I was unable to elicit a judgment about a fishing boat that was even remotely aesthetic in character. In addition there is no storytelling tradition that surrounds this activity and no larger community that is brought together through the shared experience of fishing.

Fishermen have little or no occupational reason to be unified as community. The work of fishing is potentially divisive. The seasons for freshwater fishing are short, and profits contingent on factors beyond the fishermen's control. Buyers will only pay prime prices for freshwater fish until the saltwater fishing business gets under way, and Northern crab buyers will make the journey to North Carolina only while the bays in Maryland and farther north remain iced up. Thus the watermen must make large catches quickly to sustain themselves financially during the long lean months. Their jobs are, therefore, inherently competitive. This also means that it is singularly disadvantageous to seek prestige and social status via fishing. For example, a crabber who brags about good catches is likely to find his pots surrounded by those of his fellows. If anything, turning attention away from one's prowess is beneficial.

We have two kinds of activities performed by the same men in the same environment. One—duck hunting—is socially cohesive; it is the source of social status and is surrounded by elaborate aesthetic trappings. The other—commercial fishing—is socially divisive; it is not a source of social status and is devoid of aesthetic forms. The details of duck hunting suggest that social status, social cohesion, and aesthetic production in Potuck are inextricably linked, and, in fact, this relationship is found in other aspects of Potuck life. Cohesive groups which confer social status are rich in aesthetic forms. The local church is the most obvious other example of this linking.

My second conclusion is that aesthetic forms are not simply social markers or expressions of other social facts, but are social facts in their own right. They can aid social cohesion and confer social status. A well-painted decoy and a well-constructed artificial landscape for hunting confer status on the hunter. The elaborate crafting of the hunting stage has little to do with attracting ducks. It can, however, attract admirers. Local men speak of so-and-so as having a “pretty rig,” that is, an attractive set of decoys. “Prettiness” in this context reflects the elaborateness of carving and painting. If anyone underrates the aesthetic value of the decoys, it is the out-of-town collectors and dealers who seek to remove the decoys from their appropriate context and shear them of intrinsic aesthetic attributes in the process. The hunters themselves are quite sensitive to the aesthetics of their activities and jealous of the objects that enhance the aesthetic quality of their environs. The eyes on a decoy, like all the other fine anatomical features such as nostrils and pin feathers, are purely aesthetic. Decoys have eyes because hunters paint them on, and they paint them on so that their decoys will be admired.



“Virtue Enough to Cure so Venomous a Bite”

by Miriam J. Shillingsburg

The first English-speaking people to inhabit North America, of course, came to North Carolina, and records appear as early as 1585 when Thomas Hariot brought an expedition to the Outer Banks. Hariot, a mathematician by trade, included in his party the artist John White to make a picture supplement to the written record of the new country. The writings of Hariot, John Smith of Virginia, and John Lawson, the first European to cross the Blue Ridge, as well as other explorers are full of detailed information because they were intended for those back at home in England who might be persuaded to come over and help with the colonizing effort.

Because the plentiful natural resources were highly attractive, a considerable body of “scientific” literature accompanied the propaganda luring people to North Carolina. There the motives for settlement—unlike the religious ones of New England—were mainly economic, nationalistic, and exploratory, and these ideas produced a significant literature of “natural history” well before Linneaus perfected the system by which we now classify the botanical world.

This early writing emanating from the North Carolina experience contains abundant allusions to the several plants collectively called Snakeroot. Although some modern reference works indicate that these “vegetables,” which are native to the Southeastern United States, take their name from the snake-like appearance of their roots, the earliest descriptions of them clearly indicate that they were believed to cure snake-bite, especially of the deadly rattlesnake, also unknown to Europeans outside of that region.

It is rather clear that the colonial philosophers believed in a universe in which every cause had an effect, every action had a reaction, and—they fervently hoped—every ailment had a cure. Botanist-physician Benjamin Barton opined in the mid-eighteenth century that in general “every country possesses remedies that are suited to the cure of

its peculiar diseases...that the principal portion of indigenous remedies is to be found among the vegetables of the countries in which the diseases prevail.”¹

The snakeroot plants, believed to be antidotes to the North American rattlesnake, were unknown in England, where presumably there was no need for such a remedy. Even so notable a physician as Dr. Benjamin Rush, confidant of Franklin and Jefferson, believed that “From the affinity established by the Creator between evil and its antidotes...I am disposed to believe no remedy will ever be effectual in any general disease, that is not cheap, and that cannot easily be made universal.”² What could be cheaper and more universal than the vegetables growing wild in the forest?

The earliest significant reference to Southern “snakeroots” occurred in the seventeenth century. Thomas Ashe arrived near Charleston, S.C. around 1680 aboard the *Richmond*; when he returned to England about three years later, claiming to have “had a fair Opportunity of a Survey of great part of our English America,” including piedmont North Carolina, he wrote a propaganda pamphlet. After listing the trees and other wildlife, Ashe called attention to some Indian remedies.

Ashe said he had actually seen three kinds of “Rattle-Snake Root”: “the Comous, or Hairy; the Smooth; the Nodous, or Knotted Root.” All yielded a “Milkie Juice,” and the leaves were shaped like a heart. They were “all Sovereign against the Mortal Bites of that Snake,” and “when stung, [the Indians] eat the Root, applying it to the Venemous Wound; or they boyl the Roots in Water; which drunk, fortifies and corroborates the Heart, exciteing strong and generous Sweats: by which endangered Nature is relieved, and the Poyson carried off, and expelled.” Like many other snakeroots, as we shall see, this one was “a Noble Specifick” in all “Pestilential Distempers, as Plague, Small Pox, and Malignant Fevers.”³ William Byrd II also recorded that the North Carolinians living in the vicinity of the Dismal Swamp in 1728 had a rattlesnake antidote which “put forth several leaves in figure like a heart and was clouded...like the common Asarabacca.”⁴

Ashe and Byrd seem to be describing the family *Aristolochiaceae*, popularly known as Dutchman’s pipe, believed, among other things, to ease childbirth. The many varieties of this family throughout the southeastern United States, including wild ginger and heart leaf (*Asarum*), generally bloom from March through July. In 1709 John Lawson, who was later brutally murdered by North Carolina Indians, noted that there were four kinds of snakeroot, although he failed to give any particulars.

John Brickell, M.D., who plagiarized from Lawson, probably was describing heart leaf when he explained that in 1731 the North Carolina Indians “have of late communicated the Method how to cure the Bite of the *Rattle-Snake* to the *Christians*.” The root which they used

is as hot in the Mouth as *Ginger*, and about the same thickness, it is called the *Rattle-Snake-Root*....there are three sorts of it to be found almost every where, this...they chew in the Mouths, swallow some part of the Juice, and apply the rest to the Wound, which perfectly cures those that are bit in a few moments.⁵

Both the chewing and the description of the “Tuffts or Buttons at the top like Scabions, but not of that Colour” suggest, however, that this may not be ginger but rather Seneca Snakeroot, a famous cure of the day.

Nevertheless, other witnesses include botanist-artist Mark Catesby, who sketched *Aristolochia serpentaria*, in the 1720's; he said the Indians have “some roots, which they pretend will effect the cure [of a rattlesnake bite]; particularly a kind of Assarum, commonly called *Heart-Snake roots*.”⁶ John Bartram, founder of America's first botanical garden, also mentioned (although he did not specify) the medicinal aspects of *Aristolochia* in 1751. John Banister of Virginia sketched the *A. serpentaria* and an *Asarum*, while in 1791 Thomas Jefferson listed *A. serpentaria*, or the aromatic Virginia Snake-root, as medicinal.

William Byrd, chief surveyor of the Dismal Swamp for the Virginia party in 1728, described the star grass (*Aletris farinosa*) which acted “infallibly” against rattlesnake bites. It has a white flower and a root “not unlike the rattle of that serpent.” Its leaves, which grow near the ground, shoot out in horizontal circles. And the bitter juice, Byrd explained, extracted the serpent's poison by “violent sweats.” Yet, like Thomas Ashe's *Aristolochia*, where there was no poison, the only result was “putting the spirits into a great hurry and so of promoting perspiration.” Star grass was also a powerful snake repellent—so powerful that “if you smear your hands with the juice of it, you may handle the viper safely.” Byrd could testify personally that

once in July, when these snakes are in their greatest vigor, I besmeared a dog's nose with the powder of this root and made him trample on a large snake several times, which, however, was so far from biting him that it perfectly sickened at the dog's approach and turned its head from him with the utmost aversion.⁷

Byrd also wrote in 1728 that St.-Andrew's-cross was used for bites on horses, again by sweating out the poison. Although its flower is highly variable, with some members of the genus bearing pink or mauve petals, the leaves of *Ascryum hypericoides* are narrow, and it blooms from July to September, “when the snakes have vigor enough to do mischief.” Byrd said it “grows on a straight stem about eighteen inches high and bears a yellow flower on the top that has an eye of black...[and] several pairs of narrow leaves shooting out at right angles from the stock over against one another.” Byrd anticipated the belief of later eighteenth-century scientific men when he opined that this “antidote grows providentially all over the woods and upon all sorts of soil, that it may be everywhere at hand in case a disaster should happen.”⁸

Also native to North Carolina is a “Species of *Golden Rod*” noted by Bartram, “that is so famous for the Bite of a Rattle-Snake.” It had “slender purple Stalks, rising a Foot high, with a Spike of fine yellow Flowers” which “grow out of the Bosom of the Leaves three or four in little Tufts.” A “very effectual Cure for the Bite of a Rattle-Snake; the Herb [was] boiled, and the Decoction drank, and the warm Herb applied to the Wound.” Bartram noted also Blood root, whose leaves produce a yellow juice. The flower is white, and the powder of its red root was said to cure rattlesnake bite. Likewise *Erigeron* which “bears a white Flower in the Spring, something like a large Daisy, about a Foot high,....of a hot taste” was efficacious against the serpent.⁹

William Byrd noted what he called Fern root, “said to be the strongest antidote yet discovered against the poison of the rattlesnake.” “Preferred by the southern Indians,” its leaves “resemble those of fern....several stalks shoot from the same root, about six inches long, that lie mostly on the ground. It grows in a very rich soil [in the shade and its] root has a faint spicy taste.”¹⁰ Black snakeroot, or black cohosh, was a medicinal known to John Bartram and Thomas Jefferson, and Mark Catesby noted a plant which he called St. Anthony’s cross as a snake remedy.¹¹

But the most important of the snakeroots—indeed, except for sassafras of any native medicinal plant—was *Polygala senega*, or Seneca Snakeroot. It takes its name from the Seneca Indians of New York State who touted its uses in curing snakebite. It was probably this wild flower to which explorer Mark Catesby referred in his article on rattlesnakes. Of the various remedies, he says “that which [the Indians] rely on most, and which most of the *Virginian* and *Carolina Indians* carry dry in their pockets, is a small tuberous root, which they procure from the remote parts of the country; this they chew, and swallow the juice, applying some to the wound.”¹²

As early as 1706 William Byrd had sent to Sir Hans Sloane, president of the prestigious Royal Society in England, a root “which the Indians us’d to cure the bite of a rattle-snake.” Trappers and traders, he said,

find it constantly to cure their horses, when they happen to be bit....[T]hey pound about the quantity 2 roots at most, and give it in water. It soon begins to operate violently by sweat, while the patient lys panting with the tongue out for 2 or 3 hours together, & then is perfectly well. What is wonderfull in this medicine is, that it has no sensible operation upon any creature that has not been poisond. Certainly a plant that has virtue enough to cure so venomous a bite, as that of the rattle-snake, must be of infinite use in other disasters.¹³

Byrd testified that his servants had “try’d it often, and never knew it to miss.”

Catesby, however, was somewhat more cautious about its efficacy in snakebite cases. Concerning “the direful effects of the bites of these

Snakes, it always seemed and was apparent to me, that the good effect usually attributed to these remedies, is owing more to the force of nature, or the slightness of the bite of a small Snake in a muscular part." He further explained that "where a Rattle-Snake with full force penetrates with his deadly fangs, and pricks a vein or artery, inevitable death ensues."¹⁴

Catesby's language echoes John Bartram's advice given in 1751:

Medicinal Plants...may be administered to the People with great Advantage, if properly adapted to the Season, Age and Constitution of the Patient; the nature, Time and Progress of the Disease; Without which Caution it is not likely that the Practice should succeed generally.

Bartram noted that "when a Root or Herb has been given with good Success several Times in a particular Disease, and the Patient recovered soon after the taking of the Medicine, [people] applaud that Medicine exceedingly." But, he warned, "then many that are sick of the same disease, or any other, that hath near the like Symptoms, apply directly to this famed Specifick, expecting immediate Relief." When a remedy failed, Bartram pointed out, "by reason of its improper Application, as to Time, Constitution, or nature of the Disease, many choice Medicines grow out of Repute again."¹⁵ Catesby's Indians did not make this mistake in snakebite cases, for they "know their destiny the minute they are bit; and, when they perceive it mortal, apply no remedy, concluding all efforts in vain." Seneca Rattle-Snake root remained in vogue throughout the century.

After Byrd had been in Virginia a year, he wrote Sir Hans Sloane that he had found other uses for the Seneca root:

if the powder of it be put into canary [a sweet wine] it restores the vigour of the stomach effectually, if a man take 2 or 3 swallows of it sometimes. At my first arrival here I was troubled with a violent diarreaea, which no medicine would cure but I took this, and then I was cur'd presently, & have continu'd well ever since.¹⁶

Moreover, in 1728, he reported that "lately the Seneca rattlesnake root has been discovered in this country"—North Carolina—and that it had many uses. For one thing,

being infused in wine and drank morning and evening, [it] has in several instances had a very happy effect upon the gout, and enabled cripples to throw away their crutches and walk several miles, and, what is stranger still, it takes away the pain in half an hour.¹⁷

In 1712 when a "Pleuresy" seized Charleston and "carried off abundance of our inhabitants," one practitioner "used large doses of snake root...with good success."¹⁸

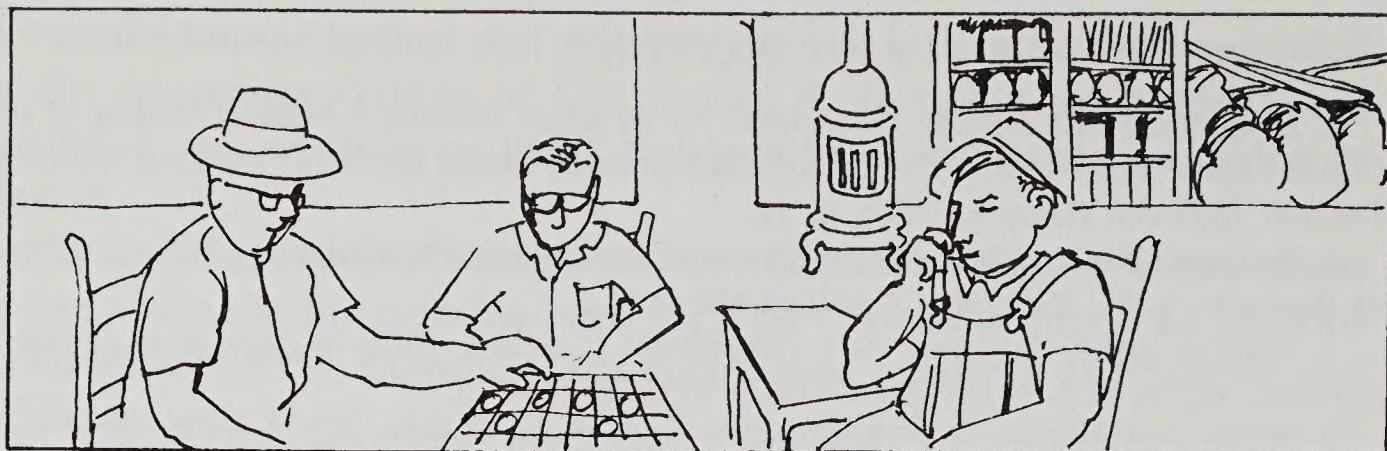
In fact in 1731 this root was thought such an "infallible Cure for Pleurisy" in Carolina that apothecaries apparently sold it over the counter. In 1735 John Tennent of Virginia wrote an *Essay on Pleurisy* indicating *senega* for its cure, and in 1738 he added "Gout, Rheumatism, Dropsy and many nervous Disorders" to the list. Tennent's further

recommendations against peri-pneumonies and inflammations, seconded by Dr. Alexander Garden of Charleston, (both published by Benjamin Franklin) caused three casks of *Polygala* to be exported to London in 1768.¹⁹

This curious group of miscellaneous wild flowers known as snakeroot owed its fame to the pressing need for a cure for snakebite, an obvious threat all along the Atlantic. That such noted scientists as Franklin and Jefferson gave them credence would seem to attest to their efficacy at least in some kinds of ailments. Such a belief was no doubt fostered by the general world view of the eighteenth century, which subscribed to the best of all possible worlds in which a remedy would be found where there was greatest need. Confidence in this benevolent creator allowed the clergyman-scientist Rev. Nicholas Collin of Pennsylvania to say, "The bountiful Creator discovers his marvels in proportion to our wants...every country has native remedies against its natural defects." The secular American Dream may have been born with his statement, "is it not then probable that as the *Polygala Senega* was given us against the rattle-snakes, so may we have faithful prognostics of the dangerous caprices of our climate."²⁰

NOTES

1. Benjamin Smith Barton, *Collections for an Essay towards a Materia Medica of the United States* (Philadelphia, 1801, 1804), as quoted by Daniel Boorstin, *The Lost World of Thomas Jefferson* (Boston, 1960), p. 52.
2. Benjamin Rush, *Medical Inquiries and Observations*, (Philadelphia, 1815), as quoted by Boorstin, p. 51. Rush later modified his view.
3. Thomas Ashe, *Carolina, or a Description* (London, 1682) in *Narratives of Early Carolina*, ed. by A.S. Salley (New York, 1911), pp. 144-45.
4. William Byrd, *History of the Dividing Line betwixt Virginia and North Carolina Run in the Year of Our Lord 1728* in *The Prose Works of William Byrd of Westover*, ed. by L.B. Wright (Cambridge, Mass., 1966), p. 233.
5. John Brickell, *The Natural History of North-Carolina*, (Dublin, 1737; rpt. Murfreesboro, 1968), pp. 143-44. See also John Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina*, (London, 1709; rpt. Ann Arbor, 1966), pp. 78, 126-35.
6. Mark Catesby, *The Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Islands*, (London, 1771; rpt. Savannah, Ga., 1974), II, 41. See also Joseph and Nesta Ewan, *John Banister and His Natural History of Virginia* (Champaign, Ill., 1970), fig. 17, and Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (London, 1787), Query VI: "Medicinal."
7. Byrd, *History*, pp. 226-27.
8. Byrd, *The Secret History of the Line*, in Wright, p. 99; *History*, p. 228.
9. John Bartram, Preface to Dr. Short's *Medicina Britannica*, 3rd edition (Philadelphia, 1751), as quoted by Ann Leighton, *American Gardens in the Eighteenth Century* (Boston, 1976), p. 165.
10. Byrd, *History*, p. 231.
11. See Leighton, p. 165; Jefferson, Query VI; Catesby, II, 41.
12. Catesby, II, 41.
13. William Byrd, *The Correspondence of the Three William Byrds of Westover, Virginia, 1684-1776*, ed. by M. Tinling and L.B. Wright (Charlottesville, Va., 1977), I, 260-61.
14. Catesby, II, 41.
15. Leighton, p. 165.
16. Byrd, *Correspondence*, I, 267.
17. Byrd, *History*, p. 272.
18. Joseph I. Waring, *A History of Medicine in South Carolina, 1670-1825*, (Charleston, 1964), p. 24.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 50 and 81.
20. Nicholas Collin, in *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, (April 3, 1789), as quoted by Boorstin, pp. 263-64.



Herbal Cures in the Fennell Diary

by James L. Glass

The archives of the Houston, Texas Metropolitan Research Center contain the diary of an Englishman, George E. Fennell, who lived in Wilmington, North Carolina, in the early 1830s. Fennell left Wilmington on 25 September 1835 to open a mercantile store for Thomas H. Cowan in Selma, Alabama. Cowan then sent him on to Mobile and New Orleans to drum up business, a task that Fennell did not accomplish. In frustration, he joined a volunteer Georgia Battalion that went to Texas on 9 December 1835.

The first eighteen pages of what Fennell called his "Memorandum Book" contain eleven "Receipts" given to him in December 1834 by an unidentified "Indian Doctor." The term "Indian" may well be inaccurate and may have been invented by a medical charlatan trying to improve his fortune by attaching an exotic name. The cures seem to be adaptations of contemporary folk medicine practices. In the following transcriptions from Fennell's handwritten "Memorandum Book," the majority of the plants and herbs named are indigenous to the eastern United States, further supporting Fennell's claim of the North Carolina origin of the "receipts."

Receipts

For a pain in the side, get 2 large handfuls Chickweed,¹ & wrap them up in 6 or 7 cabbage leaves & put them in the corner of the fire-place to bake till the weed get moist, then split the cabbage leaves open & pour Palm Oil² over the chick weed that's in the cabbage leaves & bind it to your side as hot as you can bear it.

Phthisic³

Take a large handful of Ras⁴ & ½ tb Hogs lard, stew them well down together—take a large spoonful of it warm when you are going to bed & rub the body with it at the same time warm.

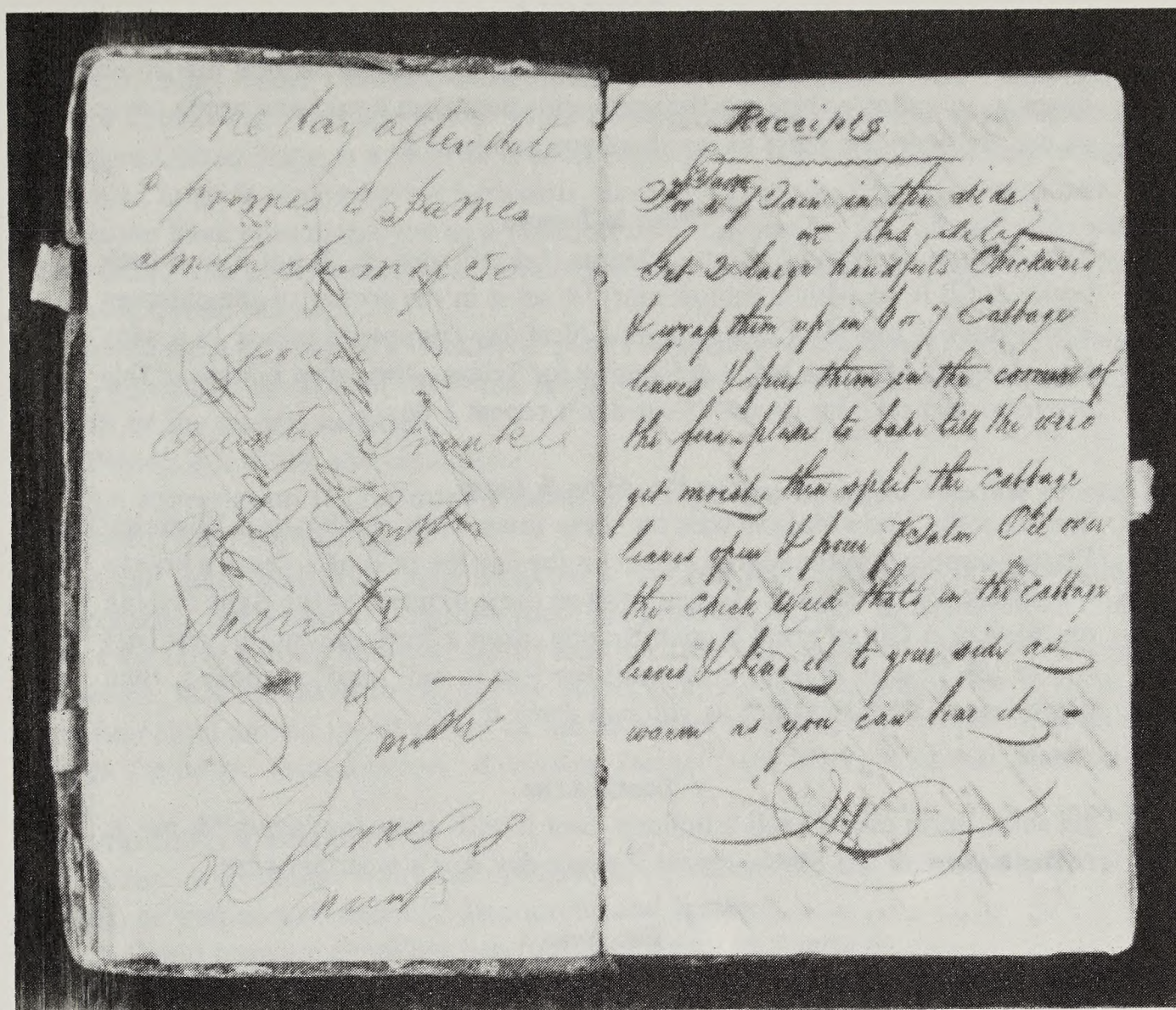


Fig. 1. Pages 2 and 3 from George E. Fennell, *Diary of Travels in Texas, 1835-1836*. MSS. Texas and Local History Room, Houston Public Library, Small Collection 88, Box 9, Folder 8. The diary is 3½" wide by 5" high, closed, with loops for a small pencil or rod to lock it. Page 3 begins the "Receipts" section.

To Cure a Stoppage of Urine

Take a large handful of Fennel Root⁵—don't wash it, and put a quart & pint of cold water to it, & boil it down to a pint—take it & put it in a Mug & pour ½ a tumbler of it out to drink, then add 2 spoonfuls French Brandy⁶ to the Tumbler you are going to drink—put a small piece (say the size of a pea) of Salt Peter⁷ in it—Make it warm and drink ½ a Tumbler full until you urinate free.

An Injection to be used when nothing will pass through the body—particularly useful for the Colic

Get 3 leaves of strong leaf [of tobacco?] or ½ tb small Plug Tobacco & boil it down with a Quart of water to ½ a pint. Add 1 Gill⁸ of Sweet Oil, 1½ Gill of Molasses—½ pint Meal gruel & a small handful of Glauber Salts⁹—heat the whole together, & inject by small quantities until it operates—Then take some warm tea or gruel to work it off.

Rheumatism

Get a pound of rou brimstone¹⁰ & pound it fine, & put it in a jar & pour a gallon of boiling water to it & stir it for 2 days—skimming it the 2nd day. Shake the white skim on one side & drink ½ pint Evening & Morning.

Another

Get a peck¹¹ of Green Arrow,¹² a gallon of strong vinegar, & boil the whole down to ½ gallon—then rub the parts with the warm liquid and apply some of the Herbs to the parts as warm as you can bear it.

Pour la Femme

Take a large handful of green Calomus,¹³ don't wash it, & put it in a junk bottle & fill it up with common ram¹⁴ & set it in the corner of the chimney where there is fire for a day or night—Next day commence taking ½ a winy [sic] glass full Morning Noon & Evening for 3 days—then stop 3 days—if this prove correct take no more—if—it don't repeat 3 days.

For the Ague & Fever

Spread some Shoe-Makers wax on some linen cloth similar to a Blistering Plaster—apply it to the bowels, when on the day the fit is off—leave a hole in the plaster for the navel [—] when you feel the symptoms of the Ague coming on, have a ½ Gill of good French Brandy, drop a fresh egg into it, sett [sic] fire to the Brandy & let it burn until the Egg is well fried or cooked, then drink Egg & Brandy as hot as you can drink it.

Tooth Ache

get some burnt allum¹⁵ roll it in linen - wet it with some laudanum¹⁶ & put it in the hollow of the tooth, repeat it every day & it's a certain cure.

Ear Ache

Cup 1 to 3 drops of molasses for deafness or pain in the Ear & if the Eye is affected, drop a drop of Molasses in the Eye & it's a certain cure.

Rubric

All the before mentioned receipts were obtained from an Indian Doctor & their efficacy have been incontestibly proven. Indeed I may say say [sic] their virtues as far as I have been concerned, have been experimentally tried & their happy effects are beyond contradiction.

Geo. Fennell [signed]

Wilmington N.C.

dec 29, 1834

Cure for the Piles

Get the old mottled Castile Soap¹⁷ and with the soap and a piece of linen cloth—wash the parts, then wipe the parts dry, then get some Oak Ashes, & take some Oak Live Gal¹⁸ [sic] and put them in the Oak ashes from the fire, & get a handful of Resin¹⁹ and pound it not very fine then put it in an Iron pot—sprinkle the Resin over the live coal [sic] & set over—while the Resin is burning & smoke yourself with it—then get some old Elder Roots,²⁰ scrape the brown bark off, then peel the white bark off the rest, put it in a skillet, fill it up with water, & put it on the fire & let it boil slow, & while boiling, add a large spoonful of Hogs lard to it & a small bit of Beeswax, let it boil awhile & skim it after which put the skim in a tin cup, then grease the parts with it & that's a certain cure.

NOTES

1. Also called Adder's Mouth, Satin Flower, Starwort, Stitchwort, Bird's Eye, Starweed and Star Chickweed. This spreading, white-flowered Old World starwort transplanted to the eastern United States is a favorite food of caged birds. It is a demulcent and refrigerant and is held in great repute among herbalists, used mostly in the form of an ointment. The fresh leaves have been employed as a poultice, as in this recipe, for inflammation and indolent ulcers with beneficial results. Contact with the skin of certain types of starworts can also cause a mild diuresis.

2. Made from any one of a number of plants belonging to the Grass Family, *Elaeis guineensis*, especially the African Oil Palm. A yellowish or reddish fat or butter obtained from the fruit of the several varieties.

3. Physic: a laxative and cathartic.

4. An abbreviation for rasurae scrapings or filings. But of what? Possible sources are hoof, horn, iron, bark or roots.

5. A tall, stout herb with finely dissected leaves and yellow flowers. It is a carminative and aromatic, not a diuretic, and the roots are generally inferior in virtue to the fruit, or seeds. One early herbal, however, stated that the "roots are of most use in physic, drinks and broths, that are taken to cleanse the blood, to open obstructions of the liver, to provoke urine, and amend the ill colour of the face after sickness, and to cause a good habit through the body" (Maud Grieve, *A Modern Herbal* [New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1943], I, 296).

6. Alcohol is a mild diuretic.

7. Niter. A crystalline white salt; potassium or sodium nitrate. Saltpetre is also a mild diuretic, as well as a refrigerant, diaphoretic and laxative.

8. A liquid measure equalling one-fourth of a pint or 4 ounces.

9. Sodium sulfate salts developed by Johann Ruduolf Glauber, a German chemist and physician.

10. Brimstone is sulphur in a solid state. Rou or Rau Brimstone may have contained an additive of reserpine (3,4,5-trimethoxy-benzoyl methyl reserpate), a whitish or pale buff to slightly yellowish crystalline powder which is an antihypertensive or tranquilizer.

11. Peck: a dry measure of 8 quarts, a fourth part of a bushel.

12. Also called Arrow Arum, Virginia Tuckahoe, Indian Bread, Poison Arum. It is distinct from White Arrow. Green Arrow is a stemless bog-herb with large arrow-shaped leaves and smaller, narrow, convoluted green specialized leaves growing from its base. This plant grows widely in all of the eastern United States and was much used by many Indians as a food plant after extracting the acrid principle with heat. In Elizabethan times the Arums were generally supposed to be effective as aphrodisiacs. In medicine, only the roots were used, after being partly dried being much too fierce to use when fresh. This recipe, calling for external application of the liquid mixture, is unusual. Normally, the root was pounded to powder and taken in syrup or wine to treat "asthma, whooping cough, chronic bronchitis, chronic rheumatism, pains in the chest, colic, low stages of typhus and general debility" (Grieve, I, 237).

13. The plant *Acorus calamus* and its aromatic rhizome. Its reedlike structure was used as a carminative to relieve flatulence and assuage pain, and as a vermifuge to expel worms or intestinal animal parasites.

14. Ram (*Ramus Novellus*) was also called Bittersweet, Woody Nightshade and Violet Bloom. It is a beautiful and falsely dreaded shrubby herb, seldom reaching a height of more than five feet unless well supported. Common ram was a tincture made by gathering the fresh, still pliant green branches and their leaves, just as the plant was budding to blossom. The branches and leaves were then pounded into a pulp, enclosed in a piece of new linen, and pressed. The juice was mingled with an equal part by weight of alcohol and allowed to

stand for a least eight days in a well-stoppered bottle in a dark, cool place, and filtered before using. The liquid was a pale chestnut color by transmitted light and had a decidedly bitter first taste, then sweet taste, and an acid reaction. Its effect was mildly narcotic and cathartic (a purgative evacuating the bowels).

15. This is a plant, not the well-known astringent sulfate powder, although the alum root does have "powerful astringent principles" (Richard LeStrange, *A History of Herbal Plants* [New York: Arco Publishing, 1977], p. 130).

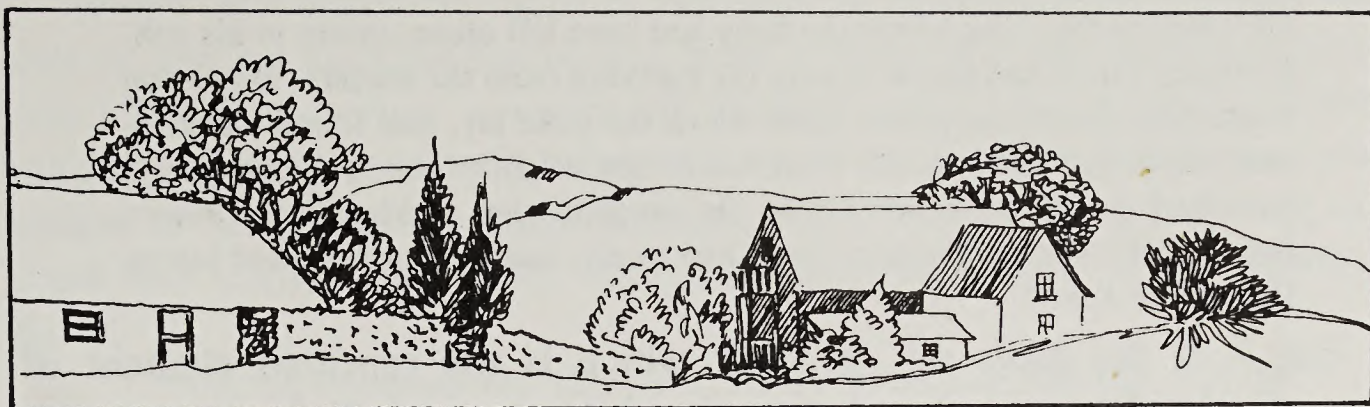
16. A tincture of opium, i.e., opium dissolved in alcohol.

17. Castile soap was a hard, white, odorless soap made with olive oil. No reference can be found to a mottled version, but it is possible that ash could have been mixed in.

18. Galls are vegetable tumors to which the oak is particularly susceptible. There are more than 300 different kinds of these tumors. They are provoked by a great variety of insects whose eggs and larvae are protected by the morbid growth. Certain galls survive in modern medicine at least to the extent that there is a *U.S. Pharmacopoeia* fluid extract of one.

19. An amorphous organic substance exuded from plants, especially from fir or pine trees, yellowish or dark in color and usually translucent or transparent. It is soluble in alcohol or ether and is brittle when hardened.

20. The Elder is a stoloniferous shrub with many stems from the base, or—under favorable conditions—a tree to 30 feet in height. Since earliest recorded times, it has been a veritable pharmacy unto itself, and is listed in the *U.S. Pharmacopoeia*. The leaves have been used as a poultice for sores and tumors, the flowers as a diaphoretic, diuretic, febrifuge, and as an alternative cure for rheumatism and syphilis. The drupes (fruit), bark, and leaves have been used as a laxative. The parts still used in official medicine are the flowers, berries, and the inner bark, which was specified in this recipe. The reason for the admonition to use "old" roots is that when they are fresh they contain a volatile alkaloid. The green inner bark has been used as an emollient ointment.



The Mole on the Neck: Two Instances of a Folk Belief in Fiction

by James S. Hedges

The folk belief, "If you have a mole on your neck, you will be hanged,"¹ seems strange today, but was heard around the turn of the century and before, when hanging was a common form of execution. Charles Waddell Chesnutt uses this belief from the folklore of the Southern blacks as an important tool to develop the theme of social strangulation in *The Marrow of Tradition*, first published in 1901.

In an early scene in *The Marrow of Tradition* Chesnutt first touches on the theme of strangulation of the Carterets, an old, established white family. Mammy Jane, an ex-slave who is nurse for the Carteret's newborn son, finds a mole on the child's neck:

Old Mammy Jane, however, was not entirely at ease concerning the child. She had discovered, under its left ear, a small mole, which led her to fear that the child was born for bad luck...It was manifestly impossible that a child of such high quality as the grandson of her old mistress should die by judicial strangulation.²

To the logic of white society, death by hanging is an unlikely literal event. But black folk wisdom perceives the foreboding sense of death by strangulation, and that perception becomes the central figurative core of the novel.

The Carteret family, smothered in the aristocratic traditions of white supremacy, cannot function. The baby becomes a symbol of the stifling effects of those social beliefs. In another symbolic scene, the baby almost dies, choking on a piece of ivory rattle, a family heirloom given by a white-supremacist great-aunt. In the folklife of the white Carterets, the valuable rattle represents a history of social prestige, but in the reality of the present, it chokes the young.

Throughout the novel, the black folk wisdom of Mammy Jane expresses foreboding about the child and strangulation. In a later scene, Chesnutt uses the belief that a cat will suck the breath from a baby and kill it:³

On entering the room where the baby had been left alone, asleep in his crib, [Mammy Jane] had met a strange cat hurrying from the nursery, and, upon examining closely the pillow upon which the child lay, had found a depression which had undoubtedly been due to the weight of the cat's body...and Jane had ever since believed that the cat had been sucking little Dodie's breath, with what might have been fatal results had she not appeared just in the nick of time.⁴

But it is the mole on the neck which is the repeated element of thematic development. Just before the child almost falls from a second-story window, Mammy Jane muses:

...the mole...neither faded nor went away. If its malign influences might for a time seem to disappear, it was merely lying dormant, like the germs of some deadly disease, awaiting its opportunity to strike at unguarded spot.⁵

And Mammy Jane's thoughts after the child's near fall continue to center about the mole on the child's neck: "The child was certainly born to be exposed to great dangers—the mole behind the left ear was an unfailing sign."⁶

Mammy Jane seeks the remedies of black folk tradition to counter the baby's problems. Believing that the child has been hoodooed, she more than once seeks the aid of a conjure-woman. Mammy Jane hangs an amulet under the child's crib as protection:

While adjusting the baby's crib, a few days [after the baby nearly fell from the window], Mrs. Carteret found fastened under one of the slats a small bag of cotton cloth, about half an inch long and tied with a black thread, upon opening which she found a few small roots or fibres and a pinch of dried and crumpled herbs. It was a good-luck charm which Mammy Jane had placed there to ward off the threatened evil...she let it remain... Of course these old negro superstitions were absurd, —but if the charm did no good, it at least would do no harm.⁷

Chesnutt has Olivia Carteret reject Mammy Jane's tradition, but allowing the charm to remain under the crib also becomes Olivia's first step in rejecting her own tradition—her belief in the white supremacy myth. While Olivia rejects her own tradition step by step, her final rejection of white supremacy occurs at the end of the novel when, during race riots, her son is slowly strangling from a bronchial infection. The white doctors refuse to come, and Olivia finally turns to Dr. Miller, a black physician who is the husband of Olivia's black half-sister and who has just lost his own small son during the riots. Dr. Miller consents to treat the Carteret child, but the fate of the child is unrecorded in the novel.

Chesnutt takes the folk belief concerning children born with a mole on the neck and skillfully weaves the belief into the fabric of his novel as a basis for thematic development. James Welch, a Native American writer, uses the same beliefs in his novel *Winter in the Blood* but without thematic value.

Welch introduces the motif of the mole or birthmark on the neck and that of the cat sucking the breath from a baby in a barroom conversation. The first-person narrator of Welch's novel sits drinking boiler-makers, while the barmaid talks with both the narrator and a man who claims to have seen the barmaid somewhere else. In the context of this three-way conversation, the barmaid relates the death of her younger sister:

"Our cat smothered my baby sister. He lay on her face one night and she couldn't breathe. She would have looked just like me, only she had a birthmark right here." She pressed her finger into the side of her neck.⁸

For Welch, however, folk belief becomes only a tool for characterization of the barmaid and the situation. Unlike Chesnutt's thematic application, here the beliefs simply express the realism of the scene and character.

NOTES

1. Wayland Hand, ed., *Popular Beliefs and Superstitions from North Carolina, The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore*, VI (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1961), 492, no. 3705.

2. Charles W. Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969), p. 10.

3. *Frank C. Brown Collection*, VII, 4888.

4. Chesnutt, p. 74.

5. Chesnutt, p. 105.

6. Chesnutt, p. 108.

7. Chesnutt, p. 108.

8. James Welch, *Winter in the Blood* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), p. 49.

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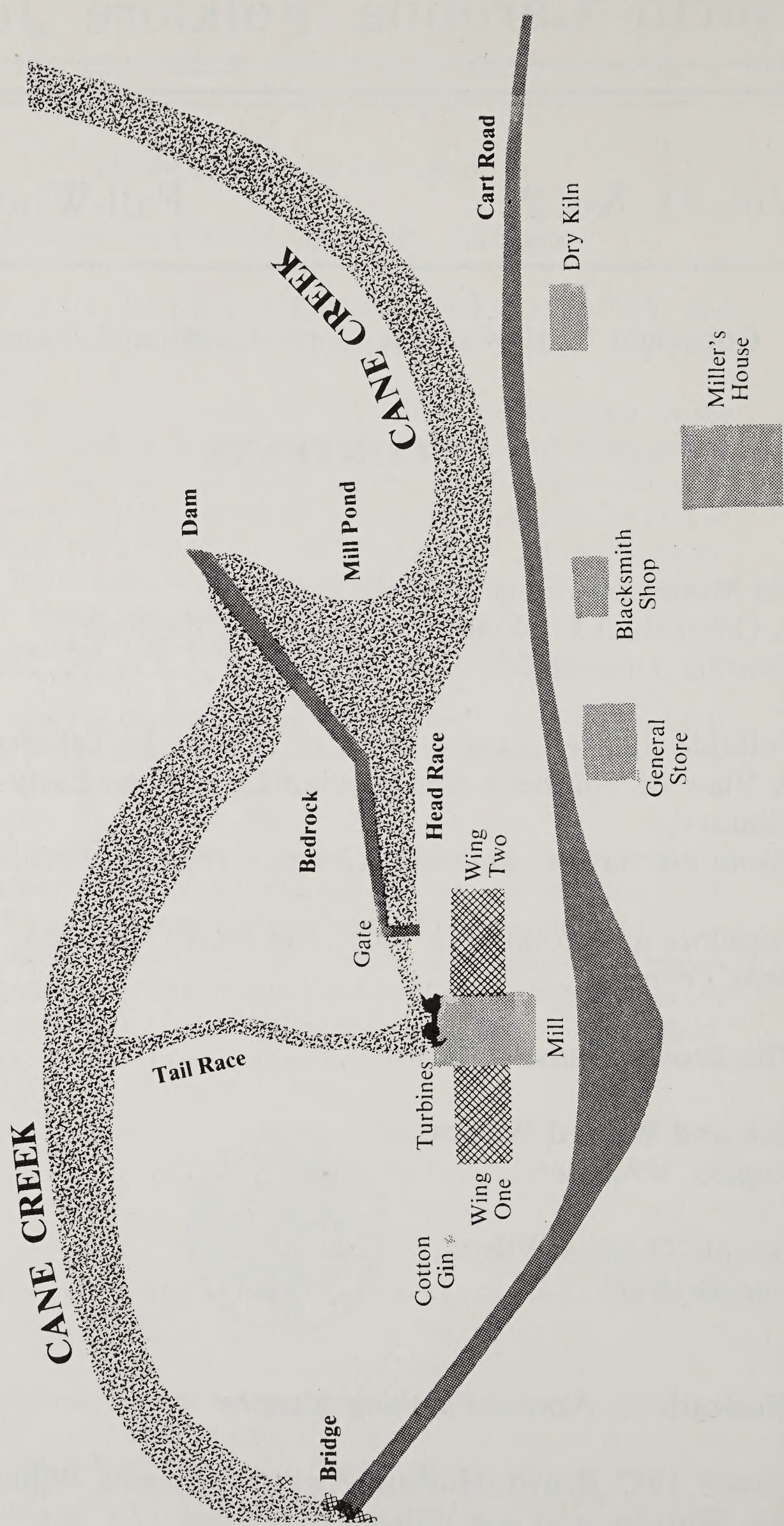
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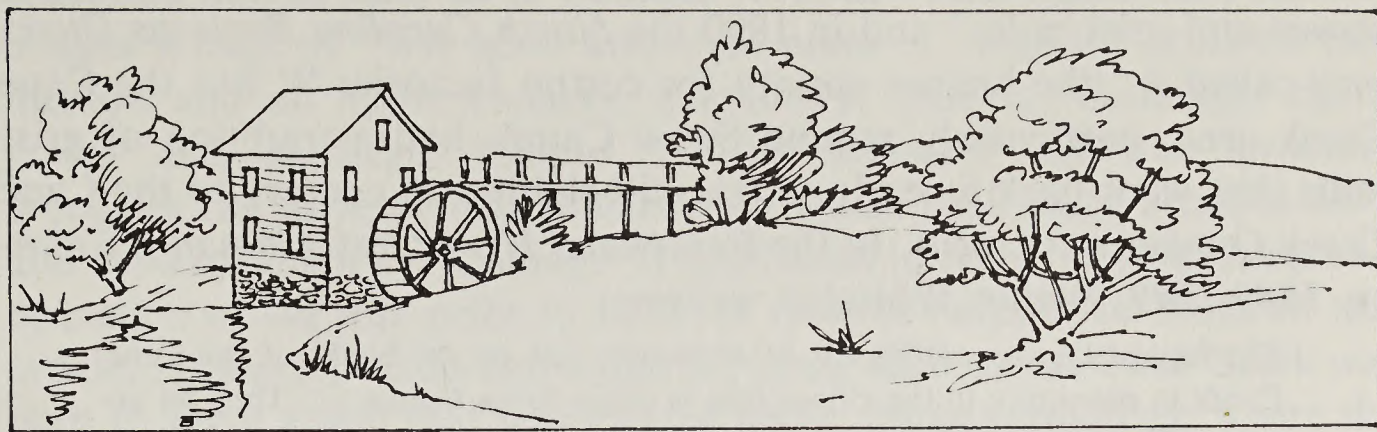
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Illustrations, *Norma Farthing Murphy*

Cover: 1983 Brown-Hudson Award recipients Willard Watson,
Ora Watson, and Joe Wilson.



Map of McBane Mill, c. 1920. Wing one was the coffin making shop and saw mill; wing two housed the furniture shop.



The 1983 W. Amos Abrams Prize

No Money and Lots of Water: A Contextual Look at the Lifeways of the the Folk

by Cynthia Anne Schley

In recent years, folklorists have made remarkable progress in understanding their own discipline through the study of material culture. By looking at the tangible objects—buildings, tools, tombstones, barns, basins, baskets, food, and farming methods of a folk culture—folklorists learn much about that folk. It is no longer quite sufficient to collect, analyze, record, and label a folk artifact; when we place that artifact in a contextual framework we open up new possibilities for appreciating the function of a folk “thing” in that culture. Folk cultures, being characteristically traditional, are governed by the rules of practical necessity, and in this sense any folk object will have a concrete function.¹ When the function ceases to exist or is replaced by a more convenient “popular” substitute, the folk tradition will eventually die. Even if the same tradition is adopted and perpetuated by “popular” culture, the context will determine that it is no longer “folk.” Hence, understanding the function of something sometimes sheds light on the origins and, where relevant, the demise of that thing. Such a process can be seen in the operations of McBane Mill as a folk institution.

McBane Mill is located in southeastern Alamance County on Cane Creek, about one and a half miles upstream from where the creek empties into the Haw River. It is the last of eleven mills on Cane Creek, all dating from various times in the nineteenth, and, in a couple of cases, possibly the late eighteenth century. Alamance County, a part of Orange County until 1849,² was lauded as early as 1869 for its abundant water

power and grist mills,³ and in 1890 the *North Carolina Business Directory* called it "the banner county for cotton factories."⁴ But the Cane Creek area, particularly around Snow Camp, had a tradition of grist mills that went back as early as the mid-eighteenth century to the Cane Creek Quaker settlement. In the *Centennial History of Alamance County, 1849-1949*, Walter Whitaker writes:

The largest Quaker settlement in Alamance was on the banks of the Cane Creek in proximity to the village that is today Snow Camp. . . . They set up grist mills and through their contacts with Pennsylvania were able to furnish the frontier settlers with many necessities.⁵

The roots of the settlement of the Cane Creek and the roots of the tradition of milling in this area are one and the same. One of the founders of the Cane Creek Meeting and the builder of the first dam on Cane Creek, Simon Dixon, is buried in the old churchyard under a round millstone, said to have been brought by him in 1749 from his home in Pennsylvania.

The long tradition of mills on Cane Creek is by no means dead in folk memory; on the contrary, almost anyone from the area over the age of sixty who farmed (or whose parents farmed) would remember the local mill as an important part of his life. A.T. Jackson, in his study of Texas mills, writes:

Gristmill settlements and towns that grew up around the mills set the pattern for a way of life that lasted more than a century. These culture traits have become a part of our heritage.⁶

As fortune would have it, the Cane Creek mills and foundries were just in the process of recovery after the Civil War when a major railway from Greensboro to Wilmington was rerouted, passing just far enough from the budding enterprises of the Cane Creek communities to make them unable to compete with the other, more advanced areas.⁷ What might have become a busy mill-town community sank back into a traditional, isolated, rural way of life. The "industries" established in the mid-nineteenth century could no longer compete and died out. Hence, the traditional demand for milling could continue to be met in this area, retaining the same function in the rural society that it had in Simon Dixon's day.

One must bear in mind here the clear distinction between the mill as factory and the mill as a self-contained part of a self-sufficient community; the "folk" aspect of such an institution must be based on context. Folk culture is never stagnant, yet folklorists tend to shy away from change as a process contradictory to tradition; generally speaking, folk culture undergoes adaptation rather than invention under the influence of practical necessity. In this sense, McBane Mill provides a good example of a folk institution, serving a traditionally consistent type of role within a fairly homogeneous society.

Exactly when the present mill was erected is not easy to determine, but the Record of Deeds for Alamance County indicates that it was an

operating mill as early as 12 October 1872, at which time Henry M. Ray bought a tract of "five acres and eight poles . . . together with the mill thereon and all appurtenances, machinery, fixtures, buildings, rights power and privileges thereto."⁸ This indicates that the structure antedates the wave of mill construction which took place between 1870 and 1890 in Alamance County.⁹ It is difficult to trace the ownership and operation of the mill prior to 1872 for reasons beyond the scope of this article. However, we do know that the stone dam across Cane Creek was built to serve a mill that was located about thirty yards from where the mill stands today. This is referred to as "the old mill lot" in a deed of 1885,¹⁰ and the remains of a stone foundation and the race are still discernible. Mr. Diffie McBane confirms this, though the mill was long gone by the time his father bought the present McBane Mill.¹¹ Although milling is unquestionably a traditional folk occupation, it was a demanding and not terribly lucrative trade when practiced on a small scale. For this and other reasons, mills often changed hands several times within a century, and such was the case with McBane Mill.

According to Diffie McBane, the mill was owned and operated by Ike Morris in 1908 when his father, Johnson R. McBane, and his father's brother, Albert McBane, bought the mill lot. I have been unable to locate the deed for this transaction, so I do not know when and from whom Ike Morris bought the mill. The most recent ownership prior to that of the McBanes which is documented is that of William Henley and Nathan Stafford. They purchased the mill lot, consisting of five acres and eight poles, in 1883, together with mills and equipment, for \$474.¹² Stafford and Henley ran a grist mill for at least a decade; the Stafford-Henley Mill appears on an 1893 map of Alamance County. Although Diffie and his wife, Dorothy, have only a vague recollection of the mill being called Stafford-Henley prior to McBane Mill, they do have a copper stencil reading, "Stafford and Henley: Family Flour, Leota, N.C., 98." Mr. McBane remembers several of these stencils left behind when Johnson McBane became miller and the stamping of sacks of flour with them. Ike Morris's time as miller seems forgotten in folk memory while that of his predecessor (assuming only one change of ownership between Stafford-Henley and McBane) still lingers, though only vaguely.

When the McBanes took up milling and moved to the banks of Cane Creek, the mill had been in operation for at least thirty-five years, and the immediate area had been a milling site for even longer. The original form and construction of McBane Mill are unremarkable. The two-story, rectangular structure stood 21 ft. 8 in high and measured 36 ft. 8 in. long, 22 ft. 6 in. wide (Plates 1 & 2). The typical post and beam frame structure rests on large oak timbers on a rather remarkable stone foundation (Plates 3, 4, & 5). The mill was situated close to the mill pond and dam, and directly on the banks of the tail trace. One has only to watch



Plate 1. View of the mill from the west side, across the mill race. Original two-story building is evident against early twentieth-century third story.



Plate 2. South side of the mill.

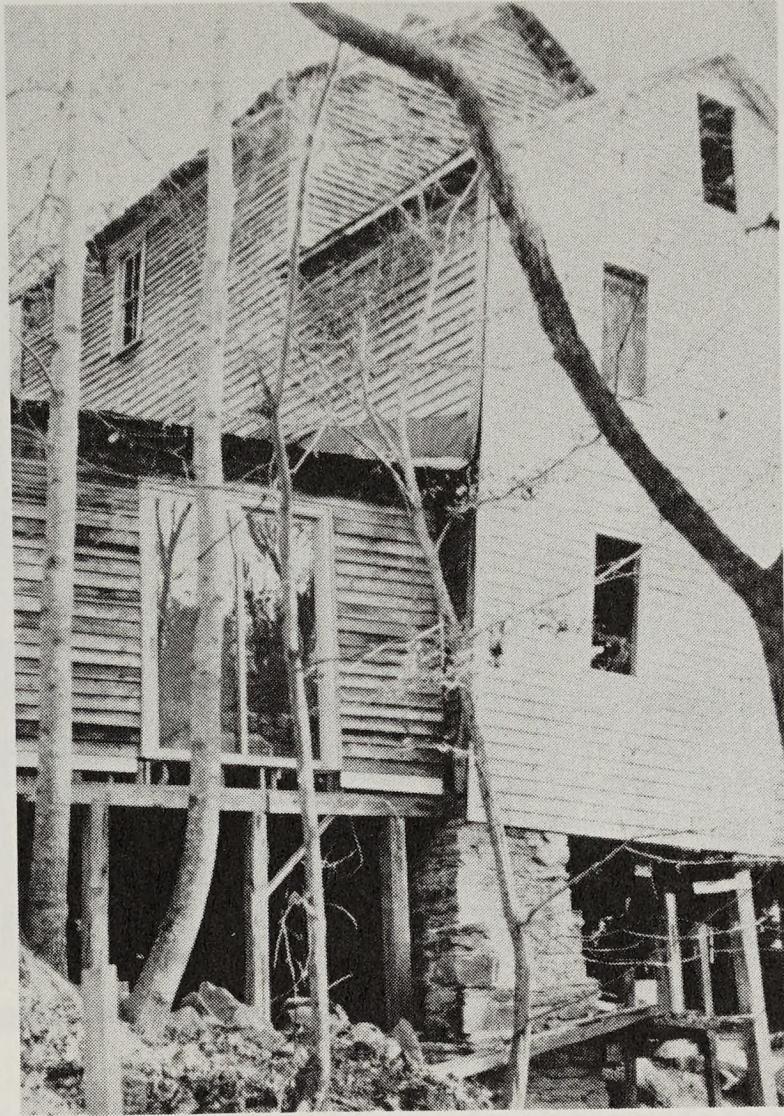


Plate 3. View of the north side of the mill, including stone foundation.



Plate 4. View of the southwest corner of the mill and stone foundation, with drive shafts visible.



Plate 5. Initials "JHW, 1884" carved into a rock in the north side of the foundation.



Plate 6. View of a floor joist and the foundation.

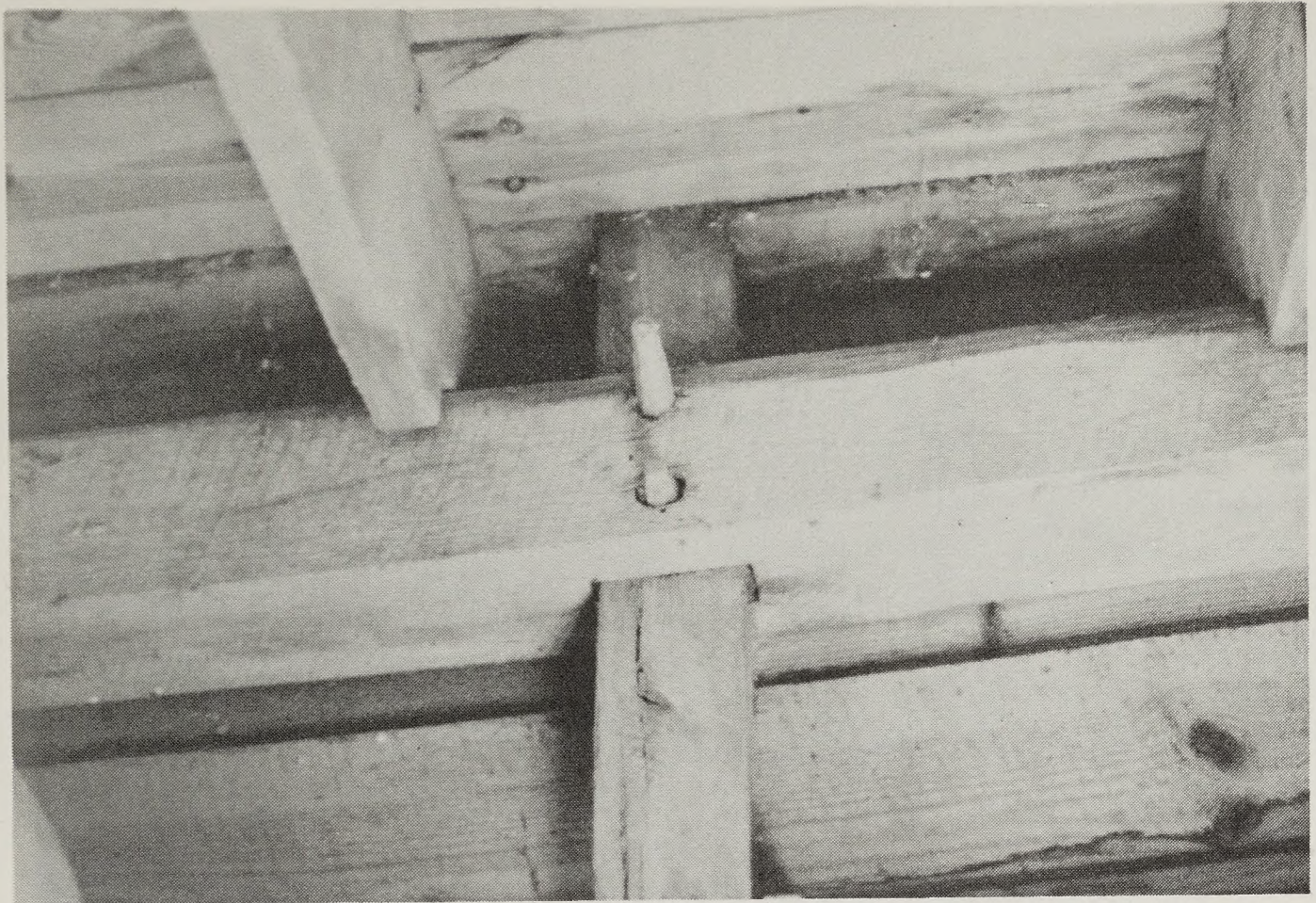


Plate 7. Pegging and notching in the interior of the mill.

Cane Creek during a heavy spring rain to appreciate the great solidity of the dry stone foundation and the skill and experience that went into the building of it. Whoever built McBane Mill was very familiar with the seasonal changes of Cane Creek and placed it as close to the water as possible without undue risk of flooding. According to the McBanes, water has entered the mill only once during the last century, in 1945 because of heavy rains from a hurricane. Although in the course of time, boards and posts have been replaced and secured, the original timbers appear to have been put together with pegs (Plates 6 & 7). Some of the oak sills are hand hewn; I cannot determine if others, which appear to be sawed roughly, were added before or later.

The dry stone dam, about eight feet high, diverts the water down the race which runs directly below the west end of the mill. Presumably, the mill was powered by an overshot water wheel at one time, but by this century turbines were much easier to use, more productive, and more readily available (Plates 8 & 9). The grist mill was powered by a turbine which turned the millstones until 1908. But when Johnson and Albert McBane bought the old Joseph Thompson farm and moved to the land on Cane Creek in 1908, they had plans to do more than grind wheat. Johnson R. McBane was a furniture maker by trade, and before 1908 he sold his work out of a shop near what is now Highway 87, no more than five miles from the mill. A millsite was eminently suited to a furniture maker, of course, so they added a wing onto the mill, and with two turbines the McBanes ran a corn mill and a furniture shop. With nearly 150 acres of



Plate 8. The stone dam.



Plate 9. View of the dam and millpond.

farm land to tend, Albert McBane left most of the mill operation to Johnson. Although Diffie was only three years old in 1908, he remembers helping out in various ways from an early age. The seven acres of mill land were separate from the Joseph Thompson/McBane farm, and Diffie recalls that his parents lived about a quarter of a mile from the mill in an old pegged log house covered with weatherboard until 1932 when they built a frame, one-story Georgian house on the same site. The old log house was then torn down; the 1932 house remains.

The McBanes adjusted quickly to milling life and expanded to their fullest potential the mill activities. Soon after Johnson McBane transferred his furniture shop and tools to the wing on the north side of the structure (the wing which remains standing today [Plate 10]), he also added a wing onto the south side of the mill. The wing opened onto the second story of the mill structure, and in this area the McBanes made coffins for local use. Diffie related his earliest recollection of this activity:

Back then you'd see somebody coming on a mule maybe or riding a horse, something like that, and they'd have a stick on their back, cross their shoulder. And that was the length of whoever was dead, man or woman or whoever it was. They carried a stick down there and give it to daddy, and he'd start making them a casket, a coffin. Mostly coffins then, instead of caskets. He'd get it made and then mamma would come down. Course they'd have everything that went in it, you know, stuffing and all the nice stuff to line it with. Mamma would go down there and finish it up, and paint it or varnish it. Mamma would do all the work on the inside, put the lining in and everything like that. Then they would come and get the casket in a wagon or something like that and take it wherever.

Dorothy McBane still has scraps of the velvet that her mother-in-law used. Diffie recalls that their friends and kinfolk from the local community would come to his father for coffins.

To meet the demand for lumber used in coffin and furniture making, Johnson McBane put in a saw mill under the south wing. The saw mill was originally water-powered though later it could be run by steam if the water was low. As Mr. McBane explained, sawing logs with water power took a while: "You could start the mill and go on off and do something else and you might have one plank sawn off." Not only did Johnson McBane saw wood for his own use, but he also served the community with the saw mill. People would bring their logs to McBane Mill to have them cut. Diffie McBane remembers that the equipment of the saw mill and the by-products crowded the south side of the mill. Stacked lumber, slab piles, wood chips, planers, and "a sawdust pile as big as this house" were part of the operation.

Johnson McBane used locally cut wood as well as bought wood in his furniture and coffin making. Even with bought lumber the wood had to be sawed and finished by McBane. To aid in this, a dry kiln was constructed about sixty yards north of the mill, overlooking the millpond.

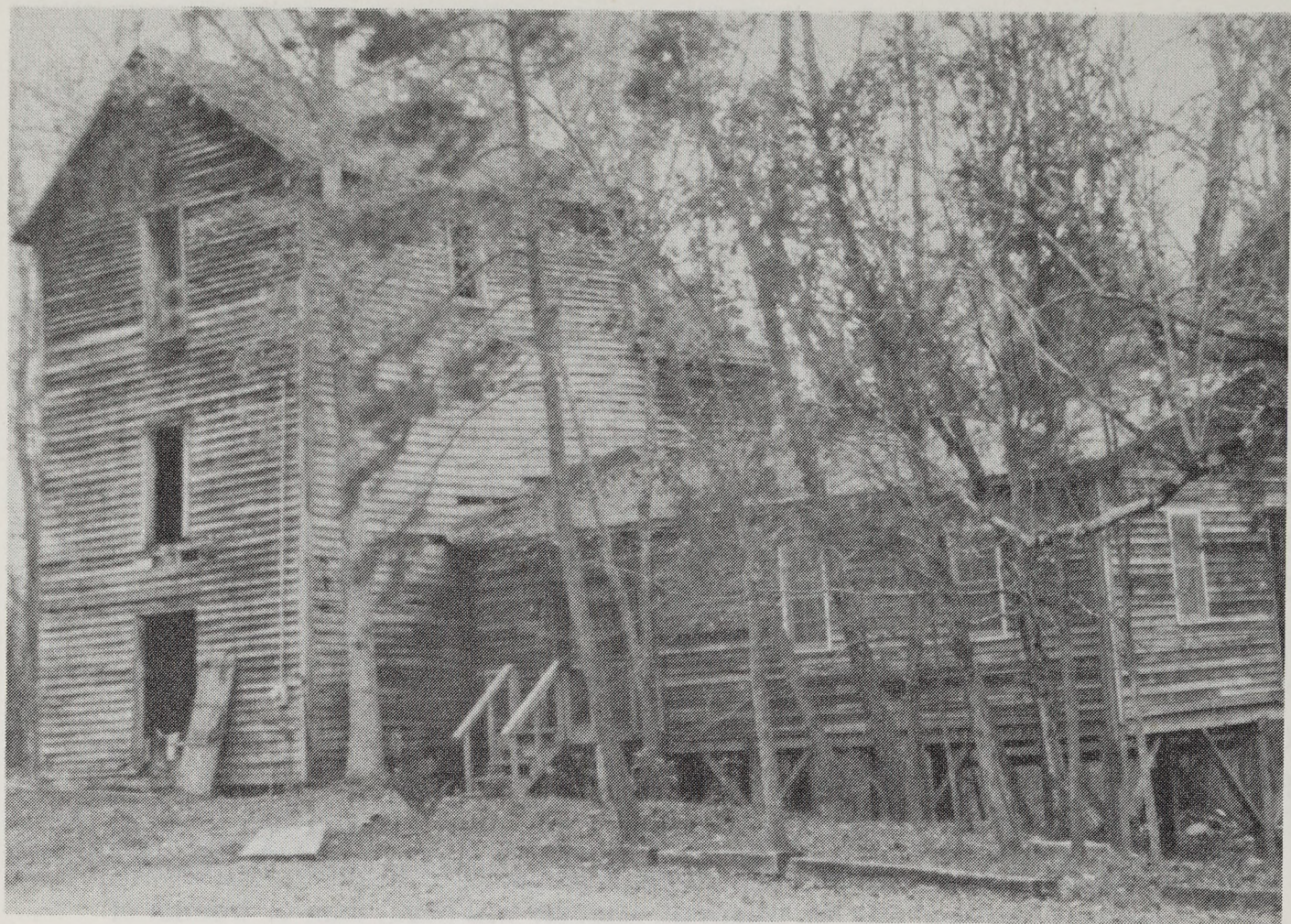


Plate 10. The mill with its north wing.



Plate 11. Roller mills from Salem, Virginia.

This structure, like other additions to the site, was probably hastily constructed for only one purpose. No trace of it remains today, but Diffie McBane describes the kiln as “kind of like a tobacco barn, where they fire it with wood.” With plenty of pine to burn, the kiln dried the wood slowly but efficiently.

By 1915, when Diffie was ten years old, McBane Mill was a busy center of various activities. Albert McBane, in addition to farming, ran a general store about fifty feet northeast of the mill structure. As in most rural communities, the general store was a gathering place for local inhabitants. At this time, most people in the area were still fairly self-sufficient, but, as Mrs. McBane explained, the general store sold items which people could not make or grow themselves, such as coffee and sugar. As in the mill operation, much bartering went on at the general store; the few extra eggs gathered over a few days were important, for they meant coffee in the mornings. For most people in such rural communities, money was scarce; Mr. McBane recalls very matter-of-factly, “We didn’t have no money then, you know.”

Prior to 1926, when the general store was active, Johnny Hadley, who lived just across Cane Creek from the mill, opened a blacksmith shop on the mill lot between the general store and the dry kiln. The blacksmith helped in the repair and upkeep of mill equipment, but mostly he served the local community by shoeing horses, repairing farm tools, installing wagon wheels, and repairing wagon wheel rims. The blacksmith shop, like the general store and dry kiln, was active during the first quarter of this century, when activity at the McBane Mill was at its height.

These trades grew up around the mill and the original attraction of the site, the abundant waters of Cane Creek. Johnson McBane ran the water-powered, stone-ground corn mill alone for several years, making “bedroom suites” and other pieces of furniture at the same time. Around 1912, Johnson and Albert McBane brought yet another innovation to their operation: they bought a roller mill from Salem, Virginia (Plate 11) and began to grind a great deal of wheat. With the extra space that the two roller mills took up and the need for more vertical space to accommodate the sifting and sorting of grain, Johnson built a third story to the mill. The roller mills were located on the first floor, with the belts which ran them going down under the mill to the turbine. Belts with scoops on them would carry the wheat up to the third floor then back down through sifters on the second floor. On the first floor the wheat passed through three different parts of the rollers; then it would be carried back up again to the third story for resifting to remove the bran. It would then be put in two-bushel sacks to be weighed and tallied. The beams of the mill still have hastily written figures, weights, and tolls on them.



Plate 12. International Harvester tractor used to power mill during dry spells.



Plate 13. The miller's house.

Although the roller mills were usually powered by water, traditional rural life involves making the most of what is available, and McBane Mill was never still for lack of water. Diffie explains:

When they didn't have water, they run it with a tractor, the old tractor that is setting out yonder, down there at the mill now. They had a shaft running under the mill and out there and they put that tractor out there to where they could put a belt on it (Plate 12).

The addition of the roller mills meant more work and more business, so Johnson and Albert McBane soon built a house on the high spot overlooking the millpond and flood plain and hired an experienced miller to run the flour mill. Diffie remembers that he was about ten or twelve years old when he rode with his father "above" the Center Church area of nearby Chatham County and moved the miller in a wagon to the house at McBane Mill. The miller's house (Plate 13) was originally a frame hall-parlor house resting on large oak sills on a brick foundation. The house measured 16½ ft. by 28½ ft., with the fireplace on the west end. Like the mill and most other buildings in the area, it was covered with weatherboard. After about 1935, front and back additions were added to the house. With a miller now living right at the mill, Johnson McBane could concentrate on running the saw mill and making furniture.

But the flour mill, at its peak, was the center of activity of the McBane's business. Diffie recalls that wagons would come from ten or more miles away, even sometimes from Chapel Hill in Orange County, to have their wheat ground. A cart road that is still quite apparent running north towards Graham came directly down by McBane Mill and crossed Cane Creek just southeast of the mill (Plate 14). Often one wagonload would come for several neighbors as it was best for a farmer not to have all of his wheat ground at once since the flour would get old. Generally, a farmer would need to come to the mill twice a year, maybe three times a year, and usually he would bring 20 or 25 bushels of wheat and some corn. Like any rural occupation depending on the seasons, flour milling was generally done at certain times of the year, and during the busiest times Diffie recalls that his father and the miller would run the mill until seven or eight o'clock in the evening, using lanterns for lighting. Sometimes, too, a farmer, particularly one from several miles away, would have to spend the night if all of his grain had not been ground or if he had more business with Johnny Hadley, the blacksmith. Mrs. McBane recalls,

I've heard Diffie's mother say that she never did know who she was cooking for every day she cooked a meal, said no telling who Johnson would bring home for dinner.

In the grinding of both corn and wheat, people generally paid by the "toll" method. That is, for every bushel of corn ground the McBanes received one toll bucket full of corn. The toll buckets, which the



Plate 14. Cart road.

McBanes still have and keep carefully wrapped up in the attic, were in the mill when his father bought it, as Diffie recalls. Johnson McBane would grind up what he collected in tolls and sell or barter it himself. Diffie's job as a young boy was to sell corn meal out of the mill, and when the roller mills began operating he helped sell the flour. For a period in the first quarter of the twentieth century much wheat was still grown in Alamance County and more than enough flour was produced for local use. During this time, Johnson McBane had a man haul the toll that he had ground to Saxapahaw. Diffie recalls:

I used to ride with one of the fellows that worked down there. Daddy and them had a wagon and a horse, and I would ride with them when I was growing up. We hauled flour over to Saxapahaw to sell it.

But the "golden age" of flour mills was long since past; although water-powered flour mills survived in the rural South longer than in most areas of the United States, the advent of white flour and of smooth, commercially baked bread was not unfelt in Alamance County. As long as it remained economically feasible for farmers to grow their own wheat, McBane Mill could continue to operate as a flour mill. But the flour mill was the first to cease operation, about fifty years ago. Diffie never ran the flour mill alone, for "it was too much to work there for me to run it or fool with it." The flour mill was the busiest and shortest-lived milling operation undertaken by the McBanes.

Sometime soon after the roller mills and miller were established, Johnson and Albert McBane bought a cotton gin and put it outside,

south of the mill. This, Diffie recalls, was one of his main responsibilities:

Daddy and his brother put the cotton gin in, and they got the mill to run so I run the cotton gin, me and Jake Hadley, the fellow that lives across the creek over here. He's about my age [77], or a year or two older than me. We run the cotton gin until we quit raising cotton around here.

Jake Hadley, the blacksmith's son, still lives across the creek on the same land on which his father lived. Mr. and Mrs. McBane recall that Diffie planted cotton for the last time in 1936, and Diffie had cotton as long as anyone else in the area did, of course. So for about ten years after Diffie and Dorothy were married, Diffie and Jake Hadley operated the cotton gin. People would bring loads of about 1000-1200 pounds of cotton, and Diffie and Mr. Hadley received a toll of about four or five pounds per 100 pounds of cotton. Diffie recalls, "When I got a truckload, then I would take it to Carrboro; a man there bought it from Durham."

When the flour mill ceased operation, Johnson McBane continued to run the saw mill; when he died on 29 January 1939, Diffie took it over also. They ground corn for another ten or fifteen years after they stopped grinding wheat, but the saw mill retained its function in the rural community longest. Diffie McBane was the last operator of McBane Mill: "I sawed down there a right smart time after we quit running the [corn] mill." But the changes were too vast in the second quarter of the twentieth century; milling as a traditional occupation and necessary function in rural society became obsolete. Diffie McBane took up carpentry and worked in Chapel Hill, though he continued (and continues) to live on the farm on the banks of Cane Creek.

The demise of the mill as a folk institution is due to many factors, all of which are related to the move off the land, a move which occurred much later in the South than in most parts of the United States. Specialization and industrialization went hand in hand, and the self-sufficient farmer became a thing of the past. As a folk institution rooted in traditional rural life, McBane Mill was far removed from the main current of popular trends. But in the twentieth century, it was not unaffected by popular innovations and influences; hence, Johnson McBane eventually installed roller mills to grind the wheat instead of stone grinding. In so doing he improved the chances that farmers would continue to grind their wheat locally with him while obtaining the desired flour of fine consistency. But despite such "innovations," the mill continued to function in a very traditional way, serving the same need in the community which mills have served for many hundreds of years.

Such an event as the installation of a roller mill may be seen as a minor variation, for it did not change the purpose of the mill or the way it worked. Like all folk traditions, milling exhibited but little variation

over time and major variation over space,¹³ until popular culture affected it so drastically that it lost its function in society. If McBane Mill had been fitted out with roller mills in 1890 to grind wheat to sell to a bakery or store in a nearby town, then we might view the innovation as a major variation through time, or to put it more simply, a change designed to bring the mill into the flow of popular lifeways. But McBane Mill, and the trades which grew up around it, were rooted in the folk tradition, and when that changed, milling changed.

It is the context, the environment in which the mill functioned, which is of supreme importance to the folklorist, as is the case with any genre in folklife studies. For just as the particular audience present at a tale-telling helps make that performance unique and fluid, the environment in which the mill functioned determined its existence as a folk institution. For example, if someone purchased McBane Mill today and with the same roller mills and equipment set up a working flour mill, he would no longer be a part of the "lifeways" of the folk, for it is the context which makes something "folk."

The increasing interest in "living the good life" in a rural area has had a profound effect on traditional rural communities in the last fifteen to twenty years. Attempts at reviving these traditional "lifeways" are part of popular culture and, ironically, have nothing to do with the folk. An interesting example of this can be seen in the Lindley Mill, also on Cane Creek. The area has been a mill site for over two centuries.¹⁴ After several years of disuse and decay, the mill was recently put back into use, grinding organically grown corn and all types of wheat for sale at local "natural foods" stores. The "old-fashioned," "natural" aspects of Lindley Mill flours and grains ensure their popularity with the "non-folk." I would be willing to bet, however, that any member of the folk community, when given the choice, would choose Martha White bleached white flour over Lindley Mill traditional, stoneground flour any day. Folk traditions, whether they be a part of oral or material culture, always have some practical function in the life of a folk group or of an individual, and when this function ceases to exist, the tradition itself must eventually die.

It was very interesting for me to talk with Mr. Diffie McBane about Lindley Mill, which he has seen in operation several times. Mr. McBane seems amazed at the advanced technology of the Lindley Mill and amused that anyone is grinding flour in 1982. With the wisdom of someone who knows in his eyes, Diffie expressed his thoughts on the milling equipment used at Lindley Mill: "I mean he's got an up-to-date roller mill over there. It's a curiosity to look at that thing." The mill, which is capable of turning out 100,000 pounds of flour in twenty-four hours, uses stones to grind the wheat.¹⁵ But the scenic overshot waterwheel is no longer used, nor is the water source. The operation relies largely on metal

equipment, an arrangement that intrigued Mr. McBane: "He's got everything metal. The state said that he had to have it all in metal now." Thinking about the modern metal equipment of Lindley Mill spurred Diffie's memory, and he recalled the huge wooden shafts which his father had made in the shop from straight poplar trees and which connected the various mills to the turbine: "No telling how long it took him to make those things."

Mr. McBane's reactions to the Lindley Mill emphasize the importance of context in defining a folk institution. The study of material culture in recent years has led folklorists to accept the significance of context as it applies to the entire field of folklife studies, for many aspects of material culture are meaningless when taken out of their context. When the original purpose for performing a traditional act, whether telling a tale, spinning yarn, or grinding flour, no longer exists, then that practice ceases to be part of folklife. The lifeways of the folk are governed by necessity, not aesthetic appeal or enjoyment. To keep alive a folk tradition when its purpose is gone is a contradiction in terms, for without the purpose, which is determined by context and environment, the tradition is no longer folk, and can never be so again. To study a folktale or a tobacco barn without looking at the community from which it came is like writing a commentary on *Beowulf* without knowing anything about early English history. Folklorists must move towards a more serious interest in context. A contextual perspective offers us more valid interpretations about the lore, beliefs, talents, traditions, foodways, and lifeways of the folk.

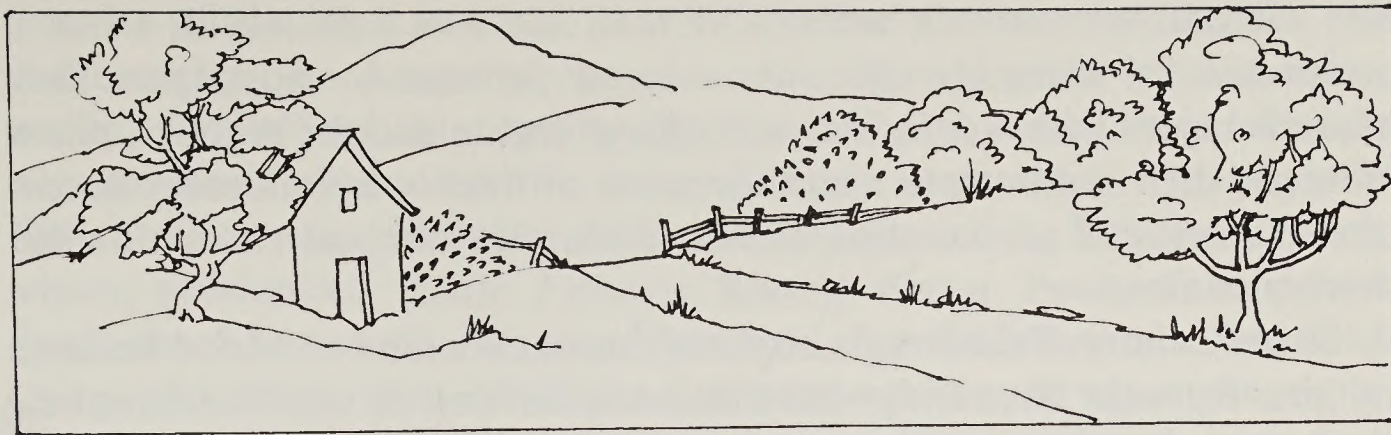
NOTES

1. I include entertainment as a concrete function here.
2. Walter Whitaker, *Centennial History of Alamance County, 1849-1949* (Burlington, N.C.: Burlington Chamber of Commerce, 1949), p. 92.
3. Levi Branson, *North Carolina Business Directory* (Raleigh: L. Branson, 1869), p. 19.
4. Branson, p. 17.
5. Whitaker, p. 33. See also Juanita O. Euliss, *History of Snow Camp, North Carolina* (Snow Camp Historical Drama Society, 1971), pp. 2-3.
6. A.T. Jackson, *Mills of Yesteryear* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1971), p. viii.
7. Euliss, pp. 38-39.
8. *Record of Deeds*, Alamance County, Book 5, pp. 610-11.
9. Carl Lounsbury, *Alamance County Architectural Heritage* (Graham, N.C.: Alamance County Printing Department, 1980), p. 68.
10. *Record of Deeds*, Alamance County, Book 9, p. 424.
11. Until his death in spring, 1984, Diffie McBane and his wife lived on McBane Mill Road less than a mile from the McBane Mill. Diffie was born in 1905 only a few miles from the Cane Creek farm and mill his father purchased in 1908. Mrs. McBane was born Dorothy America Lindley near Center Church in Chatham County where she lived until she and Diffie were married in 1926.

Mr. McBane never attended school, but he learned several trades from participating in the activities at the McBane Mill. When I interviewed him at 77, Mr. McBane was active and alert, raising a few cows, cutting lots of firewood, planting a large garden, and generally tending the land he had lived on since he was three.

As Mrs. McBane explained to me, they had no sons and grandsons, and since their daughter was not interested in the mill, they sold the seven acres of mill land to Dr. Joseph Lindley in the early 1970's. Dr. Lindley tore down the old log general store and removed some of the millstones and equipment, then sold McBane Mill to Ruffin and Judy Hobbs in 1979. They now live in the restored north wing and plan to restore the mill itself, repair the leaks in the dam, and generate electricity.

Mr. and Mrs. McBane shared their memories of life at the mill with me during fall, 1982. I hold taperecordings of these interviews.
12. *Record of Deeds*, Alamance County, Book 9, p. 10.
13. Henry Glassie, *Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), p. 33.
14. Whitaker, pp. 75-77. A battle was fought here in 1781.
15. I am indebted to the manager of Lindley Mill for giving me this information in a telephone interview.



Folktales in the Literary Work of Harden E. Taliaferro: A View of Southern Appalachian Life in the Early Nineteenth Century

by Paula Hathaway Anderson-Green

Throughout the nineteenth century numerous writers in the South, stimulated by the desire of readers and editors for fiction that portrayed life in their own region, were submitting works to literary journals, newspapers, and publishers; much of this material has continued to receive attention from those interested in the artistic interpretation of Southern culture. Yet the one ante-bellum writer who provided the most authentic picture of the Upland South, in a mode that is entertainingly humorous yet empathetic with its subject and rooted in folk culture, has remained relatively overlooked by modern critics.¹ Despite this general neglect, Harden E. Taliaferro's *Fisher's River (N.C.) Scenes and Characters by Skitt Who Was Raised Thar* (1859) was recognized in 1968 by noted Appalachian specialist Cratis Williams as perhaps the most important work published before the Civil War presenting the folklife of the Southern mountain people.² Considering the upsurge of interest in Appalachian culture in recent years, Taliaferro's work deserves closer analysis and more recognition than it has received.

The *Fisher's River* sketches contain a basically realistic appraisal of the North Carolina Upland people, who, although mostly "unlettered," possess, according to Taliaferro, "the richest unwritten rustic literature that ever graced any community" (*FR*, p. 17).³ Taliaferro's attraction to the culture and characters of his sketches, the actual inhabitants of his native Surry County, North Carolina, in the 1820's, is evident in his reference to their oral traditions as the "richest" that "ever graced" any section. The work he published is therefore an outstanding source for examining the interplay of the literary mode with the oral traditions, and

also the native mountain writer's view of his own folk world, from a perspective of some detachment, colored perhaps by nostalgia. This analysis begins with a definition of cultural region and the author's place in it, and then continues to a consideration of fidelity to folk sources, use of narrators, and presentation of folk characters and material within the literary context.

Surry County, Taliaferro's boyhood home, is a land of varied beauty, ranging from the Blue Ridge Mountains in the west to the Piedmont territory in the east, giving the county, as a whole, the technical position of a border area where sub-regions blend.⁴ However, in the American South the main cultural dividing line between sub-regions is that between the Upland and Lowland South,⁵ so that Surry's situation on the edge of the Appalachian-Piedmont sections is not a major point in defining the cultural identity of Taliaferro and the *Fisher's River* folk. Cultural geographers and folklorists have established the main characteristics of the Upland South, linking Appalachia and most of the Piedmont in settlement history, type of folk housing, type of farming, and linguistic patterns.⁶ Appalachia itself may be seen as the "core" area of the Upland South, having maintained these characteristics more intensely and over a longer period of time than any other section.

Even though Surry County as a whole straddles the Appalachian-Piedmont line in the Upland South, Taliaferro depicts his part of Surry, the Little Fisher's River area, as Appalachian. A county was, and is, an important political unit in the agrarian world, but the individual's personal world usually did not extend through the entire county, but instead was based on a more limited territory.⁷ That the locale of *Fisher's River* is Appalachian is made clear in the opening chapter:

Surry County is one of the northwestern counties of North Carolina, and joins Grayson, Carroll, and Patrick counties, Virginia. These scenes are laid in the extreme northwestern part of this county. It is a romantic section, and produces a people equally romantic. The highest part of the majestic Blue Ridge, a branch of the great Alleghany, stands in bold view overlooking the whole country. . . . Near the foot of the Blue Ridge, on its spurs and ridges, and on those rivers and creeks, lived the heroes whose wondrous feats and stories are recorded in the following pages (*FR*, pp. 13-14).

By birth and rearing Taliaferro belonged to this Southern mountain country. He seems sensitive to the inter-connection between the geography and man: "a romantic section. . . produces a people equally romantic." His characters live *on* the spurs and ridges, rivers and creeks, not merely situated at some distance to gain a "scenic view." Richard Walser, in a 1978 article, "Biblio-biography of Skitt Taliaferro," describes Taliaferro's childhood home, built by his father: "and there he built a house—'nestled on the top of a beautiful mountain. . . .'—where his son Mark Hardin lived until his nineteenth year."⁸ The word "nestled" (from a Taliaferro relative's family history) emphasizes the folk

practice of placing a house so that it lies closely within, half-hidden and sheltered by, the curves of the mountain. Roaming the hills as a boy would, "Skitt" was thoroughly familiar with the mountains and peaks whose names appear on the Surry County map and in the pages of *Fisher's River*: Round Peak (almost directly west of the Taliaferro home, which overlooked Little Fisher's River), Fisher Peak, Cumberland Knob, Buck Mountain, Warrior Mountain, Fulcher Mountain, and Skull Camp Mountain. When Taliaferro did leave home, at age eighteen, he traveled west through the mountains to join his older brothers in East Tennessee,⁹ thus keeping within the familiar Appalachian landscape and kinship network. Not until a more mature stage did he venture down into Alabama.

Years later, after two decades of adult life spent as a Baptist minister and editor, well known in Alabama Baptist circles, Taliaferro returned to Surry County for a visit of several weeks, and was so moved by the emotion of re-experiencing his past, that when again back in Tuskegee he began his "sketches," which he published in 1859.¹⁰ Certainly Taliaferro was encouraged to publish by the success of numerous other sketches, articles, and books, now known as "old Southwestern humor," that had been circulating in the nineteenth-century ante-bellum South. Still, although *Fisher's River* has certain important features in common with the works of other Southwestern humorists—the subject matter, the comic mode, and the role of the "gentlemanly" observer—Taliaferro presents his folk and folklore in a setting and manner that are significantly different.

Most of the Southwestern humorists wrote about settings that were farther south, away from the Appalachian scene. Of all these early nineteenth-century Southern writers only George Washington Harris is well known for scenes in the heart of Appalachia, with his Sut Lovingood in Tennessee.¹¹ However, there is a marked difference between Harris and Taliaferro in the way they view Appalachian character and culture. Harris presents his main character, Sut, as a scoundrel, a trickster, involved in one unsavory episode after another—comic, but disreputable, in the tradition of the back-country low-life type established by earlier outside observers.¹² Such a character is modeled more on stereotypes than any in Taliaferro, who was rooted firmly in the Appalachian folk culture. Taliaferro's background in Surry County, North Carolina, places him directly in the mainstream of the life of the average Upland Southerner in the nineteenth century, giving him awareness and knowledge of the authentic folklife of the era. Of course, Taliaferro's twenty years away from Surry County gave him the artistic distance needed to conceive of and shape his subject, but not so much as to change his basic attitude toward the Surry world.

Taliaferro writes in the comic tradition which creates a fusion of the exaggerated and the realistic, a "put down" of human nature in its ridiculous and pretentious forms (in which he is even willing to include his own profession with a tale of a misguided "brother" who hears a donkey bray and perceives it as his "call" to the ministry); but there are few if any characters who are really villainous or fraudulent like Simon Suggs or a rogue like Sut Lovingood. Instead there are farmers, millers, hunters, and a whole cast of agrarian types living out their days with zest, energy, love of life, and a sense of imagination to enliven their entertainment, which is based on a variety of folk traditions: "they preferred the sounds of the fiddle, a 'seven-handed reel,' and 'Old Sister Phebe,' to a log-pole school-house," but "for all this, they were a clever folk" (*FR*, p. 18).

In Taliaferro's depiction of the *Fisher's River* community there is a certain sense of class and caste which permeates some sketches, allowing for a standard type of Southern or frontier humor in which "rustics" are discomforted by, or get the best of, "quality folks." As part of the larger Southern culture, most Upland counties were as aware of class status as their counterparts in the Tidewater.¹³ There were leading families in each county, usually descendants of the first settlers; in Surry County that role was filled by the Taliaferros and their relatives, such as the Franklins.¹⁴ Thus, in *Fisher's River* Taliaferro is, to a certain extent, a "gentleman narrator." However, at the same time, it needs to be emphasized that generally in the Upland South class distinctions, though present, were not as prominent a factor as in the Tidewater dominated by a few immense plantations. So in places like Surry the degree of difference between classes was much less; often the members of various strata of society—from gentry to yeoman and even to some tenants—were inter-related by some degree of consanguinity, which helped give a counter-emphasis on democratic attitudes.¹⁵ In this Upland situation the "quality folks" were involved with the rest of the community on a day-to-day basis; in fact, they are considered by historian F. L. Owsley to be part of the "plain folk" also.¹⁶

The Surry County inhabitants of the 1820's were only first or second generation there, the majority being immigrants into North Carolina. Taliaferro presents them all by their actual names¹⁷ and is well aware of their family histories. Most came into North Carolina by an interior route along the Great Wagon Road through the Valley of Virginia, from "ole Albemarle" and "ole Pittsolvany." (Contrary to popular stereotypes they were not "poor whites" who had been pushed back from the Tidewater by more capable settlers.) Showing his awareness of their history, Taliaferro writes:

They came mostly from Virginia, and a portion of them from the middle and lower parts of North Carolina and a few from other sections—a sufficient number from all parts to make a singular and pleasing variety (*FR*, p. 16).

This "pleasing variety" included the English, Scots, Scots-Irish, Germans, a few Huguenots, and others, who made up the basis of the white settlements in the Upland South. Taliaferro's *Fisher's River* is an important early statement about the variety of people who entered Surry, and by extension other Upland counties, which may serve as a corrective to the many romanticists who have pictured the Upland settlers as "pure Anglo-Saxon" or "pure Celtic." Not only in Taliaferro's discussion of the settlement history, but also in the range of the folkloric motifs he presents does this variety become apparent.¹⁸ All of the various elements contribute to the making of folklife in Surry County by the 1820's no longer a rude frontier but a well-established agricultural community. Folklorist Henry Glassie has used the image of a "braid" to describe Southern mountain culture:

The Southern Mountain culture is characterized by more than the preservation of what is archaic in other areas, for English, German, Scots-Irish, Tidewater, and Pennsylvania strands were braided into a culture which, while remaining obviously the outgrowth of the antecedent areas in the Old and New Worlds, was something new.¹⁹

That feeling of "something new" gives *Fisher's River* its lively, vigorous quality. Taliaferro does not extensively manipulate or elaborate the Surry folklore, but presents it as directly as possible in the literary context. Comparison of Taliaferro's sketches with recorded folkloric items in the *Frank C. Brown* and other collections demonstrates the authenticity and range of his presentation of this folk culture.

Taliaferro as first-person narrator introduces the folk raconteurs, in turn, who tell the tales in the old-time way. His narrators are depicted in the occupational and recreational roles representative of nineteenth-century Appalachian life: farming, milling, hunting, and other aspects of a basically cashless society. Despite the lack of a cash economy these people were not really poor whites; Williams has shown that "they lived comfortably according to the standards of the time."²⁰ Taliaferro even notes that the absence of cash made the inhabitants of Surry unusually honest and generally uninterested in social status symbols (*FR*, p. 19).

In *Fisher's River* the tale-telling arises from a character's involvement in his work or recreation, as portrayed in an opening "frame"; this device as employed by Taliaferro is not mechanical, but organic, in that it reveals an aspect of community and family life which is connected to the tale it introduces. For example, since hunting was a major part of the nineteenth-century Appalachian man's life, over a dozen tales in *Fisher's River* are hunting yarns. The favorite raconteur for hunting exploits is Uncle Davy Lane, who boasts that as a result of one deer hunt,

I can tell you, we had nice livin' fur a fortnight. Some o' the old bucks would a cut four inches clare fat on the rump. . . Thar was skins aplenty to make me and all the boys britches, and to buy ammernition to keep old Bucksmasher [his gun] a-talkin' fur a long time. . . (*FR*, p. 71).

One of Uncle Davy's most memorable tales, which demonstrates the type well, is "The Ride in the Peach-Tree." This yarn opens with a certain hunt at Skull Camp, where Uncle Davy claims to have had luck, chancing upon "'bout a dozen old bucks and one old doe." After "smashing" the doe, he "commenced picking off" the bucks one by one, until he got to the last and biggest. Just at that moment he ran out of ammunition. In frustration he grabbed a peach pit from his pocket, rammed it down the musket barrel, and fired away. There was a direct hit, but the buck managed to run off, so Uncle Davy gathered up the rest of his booty, and went home. Three years later, deciding to try his luck at Skull Camp again, Davy arrived there to hunt, but, being hungry, was distracted by the sight of a large peach tree growing up by the side of a cliff. From the cliff's edge Davy stepped off into the top of the tree and began eating, and he tells what happened:

I hadn't gulluped down more'n fifty master peaches afore, by golly! the tree started off, with me in it, faster nur you uver seen a scared wolf run. When it had run a mile ur so, I looked down to see what it mout mean. And what do you think? True as preachin', the peach-tree was growin' out'n an old buck, right behind his shoulders (FR, p. 72).

That buck, the very one Davy had shot with his peach pit three years earlier, ran for fifteen miles with Davy clinging to the tree for dear life, until they finally came to a stop and Davy was able to climb down. In the ironic close of the tale Davy has to walk all the fifteen miles back past many deer who seemed to flaunt themselves, knowing he had no gun.

Uncle Davy's tale of "The Ride in the Peach-Tree" is well known in oral tradition, as Tale Type 1889c (Aarne), also classified by motif as X1130.2 (Baughman) "Fruit tree grows from head of deer shot with pit of fruit by hunter who had no regular bullets." This tale had wide circulation in European traditions and had been published in 1785 in England in *Baron Munchausen's Narrative of His Marvelous Travels and Campaigns in Russia*, although in that version a cherry tree grew out of a stag's head.²¹ The American distribution for this motif in oral circulation includes New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Missouri, Kentucky, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Michigan, which illustrates the cultural connection between the Upland South and the Midwest.²²

At the close of the "Peach-Tree" tale a brief interchange between the teller and his audience emphasizes the "pose" which was an essential structural element of the tall-tale tradition, that is, the claim of the narrator to have experienced the adventure first-hand:

'To—be—shore, Mr. Lane?' said old Mr. Wilmoth, a good credulous old man; 'ef I didn't know you to be a man of truth, I couldn't believe you. How do you think that peach-tree come up on the back of that deer?'

'Bless you, man! it was from the peach-stone I shot in his back, as jist norated—nothin' plainer' (FR, p. 74).

The tradition depended on the gullibility of the audience, or at least their willingness to suspend disbelief in order to enjoy a sense of wonder or fantasy within a framework of reality. In the Appalachian settlements, particularly, the art of story-telling was prime entertainment, and Uncle Davy was well aware of his significant role, a position he knew he had to maintain against any "pretenders": "True, he had many obstinate competitors, but he distanced them all" (*FR*, p. 51). He would make his tales vivid by casting them in first-person narrative, always swearing on "a stack of Bibles" that he had these experiences: "What I know, I know—what I've seen, I've seen." However, as we see, the motifs and yarns were truly folk material, handed down orally over time and space, although the form in each generation awaited the flourishes of a master raconteur who could capture the attention of the listeners, drawing them into the world of the tale.

The times when Upland farmers gathered around to listen to "yarn-spinning" were often part of their regular working day, as opportunity arose naturally during a slack period in the agricultural work cycle. Waiting at the mill for wheat or oats to be ground allowed the men leisure to exchange anecdotes and to hear tales spun by one of Surry County's favorite narrators, Larkin Snow, the miller. Larkin, one of the prolific Snow family who came to Surry from "old Albemarle," was "doomed to be a miller" and thoroughly enjoyed his calling. Taliaferro shows that Larkin is fated, not so much by arbitrary Providence, as by natural instincts, for his role at the mill, where he is usually in the center of a gathering, entertaining his customers while the mill wheel turns. Although Larkin never owned his own mill, he was an ambitious man in one way: "His ambition consisted in being the best miller in the land, and in being *number one* in big story-telling" (*FR*, p. 141). As proof of Larkin's ability and eagerness to "hold his own with them all, even with Uncle Davy Lane," Taliaferro includes Larkin's tales for the reader's judgment, one of which is "The Story of the Eels."

Although not a standard tale-type, "The Story of the Eels" is based on a traditional motif (X1153) "person catches fish by remarkable trick." Larkin tells of planting a "track patch" (vegetable garden) near the bank of the river, just below the mill dam, where he could tend it during slack times at the mill. The flourishing patch was planted with Crowders, peas that were a favorite with his family; however, the folks soon noticed that something was eating the crop, even though there was a fence and gate and the "varmint" left no tracks. Puzzled, Larkin sat up one night, when the moon was bright, and saw about 500 eels dart out of the river into his pea patch. They had come up the river as far as the dam and couldn't go any farther, and they had already eaten everything in the water before coming on land. Then Larkin contrived a plan to keep them from further ruining his crop. He found the only place where the eels

could get out of the river onto the land, and the next time they went into his field, he dumped a barrel full of dry ashes in that path; then he hollered so loudly that the eels all headed for the river, got trapped in the ashes, and died. As a finale to the tale, Larkin brags that "we shucked out the whole river" and that he skinned, cleaned, and barreled up all those eels for the family's eating pleasure.

In "The Story of the Eels" Larkin Snow is particularly effective in developing the framework of the tale to imply that it really happened to him and his family, emphasizing the labor they put into their pea patch, "we spilt sevrul galluns uv humin grease workin' "—a technique certain to gain a sympathetic response from the audience. Just how much of the eel tale Larkin believes is something Taliaferro leaves ambiguous, in authentic folk raconteur fashion, concluding, "This story he would tell you cooly, while he would occasionally feel of his meal. . . He would then give you one of his peculiar looks. . ." (FR, p. 148).

Of all the folk characters in *Fisher's River* the best developed are the raconteurs themselves, such as Davy Lane and Larkin Snow. Through Taliaferro's use of a "double-narrator" technique, the reader meets each tale-teller in two stages: first, there is the official introduction by the author, using the first-person narrative, reminiscing about his boyhood life in Surry County and the characters he knew there, and next, each raconteur commands the stage for himself. In each sketch the use of the double-narrator approach allows the reader to move from a distant, objective, "outsider's" view into a close, subjective, folk-world perspective. Although other Southwestern humorists used the double-narrator technique, usually they intended an opposite effect from that of Taliaferro, lacking his sympathetic insight into character and setting. In fact, the typical Southwestern humorist aimed primarily to increase the reader's sense of distance from the folk by using the framework to create a separation, and then presenting comic characters in absurd or unsavory situations. Taliaferro, however, brings the reader into the world of simple, but attractive, people, and as the reader develops empathy with the tale-tellers, he may become, by extension, a part of the folk audience.

While Taliaferro views life in Surry County sympathetically, at the same time his portrayal is not limited by an attempt to ignore some serious problems of that place and era; instead his desire is to use humor as an effective means to increase insight in his readers and develop their empathy for others. In particular, Taliaferro's willingness to treat the racial situation in this way is remarkable for a Southern writer in 1859. (Although Taliaferro's role as a minister may explain his sensitivity on this crucial issue, that did not hold true for some of the Southern clergy.) Without directly stating his own racial views, Taliaferro implies admiration for his only black narrator, the Rev. Charles Gentry, whom he introduces as a "good and clever" man, willing to "run up against

established views" (FR, p. 187). Gentry's tale is a sermon, "The Origin of the Whites," an amusing, but revealing, reversal of the Cain-Abel motif of the Old Testament. In this we see how Southern blacks absorbed aspects of European oral traditions through the churches, but sometimes modified these to fit their own experience and outlook.

The prevailing nineteenth-century white view, that blacks were descendants of Cain and thus somehow set apart and doomed to their lowly status because of Cain's sin, was based on popular beliefs that had developed over centuries and had been passed on largely through folklore. The folkloric motif of "the mark of Cain" (Thompson Q556.2), while having roots in the Old Testament, was greatly expanded and emphasized by later generations and cultures, for example in Irish myth and Spanish exempla. Although "the mark of Cain" in these motifs was not always connected to blacks, the general stigmatizing of an entire race through a belief based on a Bible passage became an apology for slavery in nineteenth-century America, especially in the South.

An example of the then-current attitude toward blacks among Southern whites may be seen in the following sample of North Carolina folklore from the *Brown Collection*. The story, entitled "The Origin of the Negroes," was collected in Durham County in about 1927-28:

When God had finished making the world, and all that is in it, He had a few scraps left over. Now God could think of nothing else to make, so He took these scraps and put them into a large iron pot. . . then He turned the pot upside down and said, "Iron pot, make whatsoever thou wilt." . . . When He turned it over a little negro, or black boy and girl were standing there. And these were the first black people on earth.²³

This kind of lore, in which blacks are seen as "scraps" who were not even conceived of by the Lord Himself, reflects the general atmosphere in which Surry Countians, as well as other Southerners, lived.

That dominant attitude is cleverly counterattacked in Gentry's tale, "The Origin of the Whites." In Gentry's version Adam and Eve were created black, and, of course, their children, Cain and Abel, were black. However, after Cain's murder of Abel, when the Lord confronted Cain about the deed, Cain turned as white "as bleach cambric" from fear (FR, p. 189), and his descendants have been white ever since. Thus God put a "white mark" on Cain as his symbol of sin. The implication of this for a white society that perpetuated slavery is obvious. The inclusion of Gentry's story in the *Fisher's River* sketches meant that some whites, at least, found it significant. Like Gentry, Taliaferro was a Baptist preacher, and we may suspect that he, too, was "willing to run up against established views."²⁴

In *Fisher's River* the folktales come from the mouths of characters involved in hunting expeditions, militia musters, eating contests, courtships, the "doctoring" of patients according to principles of folk medicine, and other situations typical of Southern mountain life.

Taliaferro, unlike many authors, does not use folkloric material for political purposes, nor does he treat it symbolically. Instead, he allows the reader a direct approach to the people of an actual community in the pre-Civil War Upland South. The reader may become a part of the folk audience; he or she sits with others on the front porch in the evening or at the mill on a hot afternoon, under the spell of the motifs and tales that passed from generation to generation, from Europe and the British Isles to the Southern Appalachians, polished by each successive teller, passing the test of time by revealing insights into human personality, desires, ambition, and the human condition in general.²⁵ Harden Taliaferro, an almost forgotten Baptist preacher and editor, skillfully depicted for the reader of *Fisher's River* the Upland Southern folk culture as it was lived in North Carolina in the 1820's.

NOTES

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1. M. Thomas Inge, ed., *The Frontier Humorists: Critical Views* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1975), p. 321.

2. Cratis D. Williams, "Mountain Customs, Social Life, and Folk Yarns in Taliaferro's *Fisher's River Scenes and Characters*," *North Carolina Folklore Journal*, 16 (1968), 143.

3. Harden E. Taliaferro, *Fisher's River (North Carolina) Scenes and Characters*, by "Skitt, Who Was Raised Thar" (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1859). All further references to *Fisher's River* will be to this edition and will be included in the text.

4. James W. Clay and others, eds., *North Carolina Atlas* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975). This shows maps with slightly varying subregional boundaries, as defined by different criteria; for example, see map, p. 6, which places all of Surry County in the Piedmont, and map, p. 139, which has a boundary line for the Blue Ridge subregion cutting through Surry County.

Henry Glassie, "Southern Mountain Houses: A Study in American Folk Culture" (Dissertation: University of Pennsylvania, 1965), p. 8: "Neither topography nor political divisions can define consistent cultural regions...."

Glassie, *Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), p. 39: "Regions have fuzzy, syncretistic borders...to define them...is a process of constant compromise."

5. Glassie, *Pattern*, pp. 64-124. Also see map on page 39. John F. Rooney, Jr., Wilbur Zilensky, and Dean R. Louder, *This Remarkable Continent* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1982), pp. 8-10. Louis D. Rubin, "Southern Literature: A Piedmont Art," in *William Elliott Shoots a Bear: Essays on the Southern Literary Imagination*, ed. Louis D. Rubin (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1975), pp. 195-213.

6. *Ibid.*

7. The evidence for cultural "boundaries" within counties is seen, for example, in the discussion of instrumental music traditions in the Blue Ridge Mountains by Tom Carter, *Notes to Old Originals*, Vols. I and II (Somerville, Mass.: Rounder Records, 1976).

8. Richard Walser, "Biblio-biography of Skitt Taliaferro," *North Carolina Historical Review*, 55 (October 1978), 376. The quotation within the quotation is from Taliaferro family records. Also, Walser explains that Harden E. Taliaferro changed the usage of his name from "Mark Hardin" to "Hardin Edwards"; then later a bibliographer incorrectly recorded "Hardin" as "Harden."

9. *Ibid.*, p. 378. Also, a paragraph of recognition to Taliaferro's "stories from the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina" is given in J. Wayne Flynt, *Dixie's Forgotten People* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), p. 20.

10. Walser, p. 384.

11. Hennig Cohen and William B. Dillingham, *Humor of the Old Southwest* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1964; 2nd ed. 1975), presents the major writers in the genre. Many of them were born outside the South; Harris was born in Pennsylvania, and although brought to Tennessee in childhood he lived in town (Knoxville) without the same experience as Taliaferro in the agrarian world that was basic in the formation of Southern character. Of course, another aspect of the difference between Taliaferro and Harris is that the latter's purpose was intensely satiric, with Sut, the trickster, revealing even worse behavior in other characters, including aristocrats and outsiders. Taliaferro's motive in writing was quite distinct from that of Harris.

12. Robert J. Higgs and Ambrose N. Manning, *Voices From the Hills: Selected Readings of Southern Appalachia* (New York: Ungar Publications, 1975), pp. 55-77, has a good section on the early travel accounts and other material that created the "low-life" stereotype.

13. Paula Hathaway Anderson-Green, "The New River Frontier Settlement on the Virginia-North Carolina Border, 1760-1820," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 86 (October 1978), 430, discusses the matter of aristocratic-democratic attitudes in the Southern Upland region.

14. Walser, pp. 367-77.

15. W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Vintage Books, 1941; rpt.), p. 27.

16. Frank Lawrence Owsley, "Plain Folk," in *The South: Old and New Frontiers, Selected Essays*, ed. Harriet Chappell Owsley (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1969), p. 34.

17. See United States Census Records, Surry County, North Carolina, 1820-1840.

18. Anderson-Green, "Folklore and Fiction in Nineteenth-Century North Carolina: Taliaferro's *Fisher's River* and Chesnutt's *The Conjure Woman*" (Dissertation: Georgia State University, 1980), Chapter V. The dissertation presents a full discussion of the range of Taliaferro's motifs and tale-types which it is not possible to include here.

19. Glassie, dissertation, p. 17; also discussed in *Pattern*.

20. Williams, p. 144.

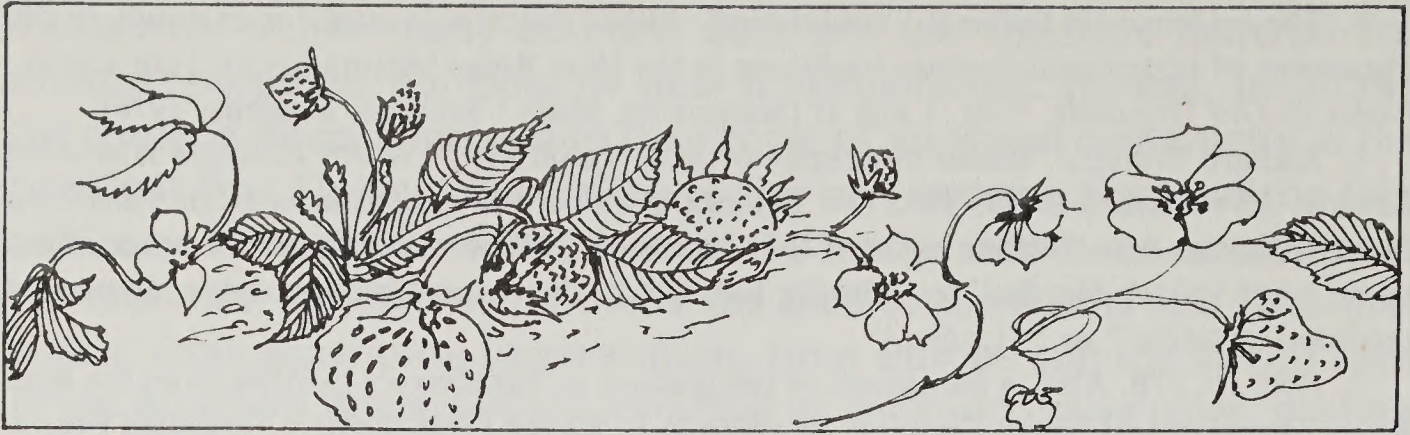
21. One American version, appearing in Chase's *Grandfather Tales*, claims that an acorn lodged in a sore on a horse's back and grew. Another American version, traced back to an account in 1797, is that of seeds growing in an alligator's back.

22. Glassie, *Pattern*, p. 38: Figure 8, "The Movement of Ideas."

23. *The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore*, ed. Newman Ivey White (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1952) I, 632.

24. Walser, p. 389, finds that Taliaferro was a staunch supporter of the C.S.A.; however this probably was based on a states-rights position or regional loyalty rather than on racial views.

25. Heinrich Robert Bettich, "Harden Edwards Taliaferro: Life, Literature, and Folklore" (Dissertation: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1983), has found evidence that some of the folktales of *Fisher's River* are still in oral circulation in Surry County, North Carolina.



Foodlore and Folklife in Tidewater North Carolina

by John Forrest

Potuck is my research name for a town located in the northern Tidewater region of North Carolina. At first glance Potuck seems a typical folk community: a tightly knit, traditionally organized, small group of kin and close friends standing shoulder to shoulder against encroachments from the outside world. Detailed ethnographic investigation of the town, however, considerably complicates the picture, for it exposes both a tangled skein of schisms, conflicts, and feuds, and, more important, a general way of life based on isolated individualism. To discover what holds the community together in the face of these powerful centrifugal forces is a serious puzzle. The church is a stock and obvious answer, but a look around the congregation on an average Sunday demonstrates how few townsfolk attend services regularly. This light attendance, of course, does not mean that church values are not widely held or that the church is not a major part of the socialization of local people. However, it does suggest that the church is not the direct and immediate vehicle of the social cohesion that it preaches. Surprisingly sharing food seems the ongoing, day-to-day process that articulates and defines social bonds.

The people of Potuck spend much of their working and leisure time by themselves or in the company of one other person. Traditionally men are self-employed as farmers or fishermen and work directly out of their homes. Farmers live on the land which they cultivate, and fishermen live on the banks of swamp canals that give them access by boat to the fishing grounds. Their business concerns are small enough for one or two men to operate handily. For recreation these men may go fly fishing or duck hunting, pursuits that are carried out individually or in pairs, or they may have hobbies which they indulge in alone.

The traditional woman's role is one of homemaker, an occupation that keeps her isolated for much of the day. General social visiting is quite rare, and many opportunities for social gathering are overlooked. The process of making quilts demonstrates this nicely. In many parts of the United States the production of a quilt is, in part, a joint effort. One woman pieces a number of tops, assembles sufficient batting and backing material for the tops, and then invites her friends to a quilting bee at which the tops are sewn to the batting and backing using a decorative quilting stitch. In Potuck quilts are made from start to finish by one woman without the aid of others.

In Potuck there are, however, many ways of sharing food, all of which force communion between isolated individuals. The whole social interaction based on food is made possible because raising, catching, or hunting food is the core of the local economy and the center of a good deal of leisure activity. This economic foundation reinforces the seasonal round of foods that grace the table. Even though the home economies of Potuck families are not inexorably tied to local production in the way that they were before a road was built through the swamp, local people still keep an annually cyclic character to their diet. Also for reasons of thrift and freshness, vegetables and small livestock are raised at home whenever possible.

Because Potuck is situated in swampland with access to marsh, fresh water, and salt water, natives eat a wide variety of flesh. Table 1 is a list of flesh that is locally considered edible. Judging from this one would almost believe that Potuckans eat everything that walks, crawls, or swims. But they are very particular and will not eat a variety of flesh foods that are available to them and that they know are eaten by some people.

Table 1: "Edible" Flesh

Meat	Poultry		Fish		Shellfish
Pork/Ham	Chicken		Spot		Crab
Beef/Veal	Wild Duck (Puddle and Marsh)		Croaker		Oyster
Lamb/Mutton	Canada and Snow Goose		Speckled Perch		Scallop
Venison	Coot	Quail	Bluefish	Bream	Shrimp
Squirrel	Turkey	Blackbird	Drum	Speckled Trout	
Rabbit	Dove	Woodcock	Flounder	Rockfish	
Frog legs	Pigeon	Snipe	Mullet	Panfish	

Table 2: "Inedible" Flesh

Meat	Poultry	Fish	Shellfish
Raccoon	Pheasant	Eel	Clam
Possum	Sea Duck	Bass	Mussel
Muskrat	Crow	Skate	Crawfish
Goat		Pike	
		Catfish	
		Carp	

Table 2 lists those flesh foods which were mentioned to me as inedible. These foods are characterized as too "wild" or too "strong" for local tastes. Derision is heaped on those people who eat these foods for their lack of taste or of sense. For example, out-of-town sport fishermen, who are the constant butts of local humor, are scorned for eating largemouth bass. My impression is that Potuckans think that non-locals who eat bass, possum, and so on, have no ability to distinguish between the edible and the inedible. That is, they believe that the foods that they will not eat are *intrinsically* distasteful, and, therefore, a person who enjoys them must be lacking in powers of discrimination.

One Potuck man runs absolutely athwart local opinion in believing that no flesh is intrinsically undesirable, and once conducted a humorous experiment on his wife and daughter to demonstrate that culturally distasteful foods taste good nonetheless. The women were due to go on a long shopping expedition to Virginia, and he knew that they would be very hungry when they returned. On the day before the expedition he bought a bushel of oysters and made a great display of shucking them. After the women had left for Virginia, he went to a local pig farmer and procured a batch of "mountain oysters" (pigs' scrota). In the evening when the women returned he was at the stove frying "oysters." He offered them each a plateful, which they accepted and ate with relish. Only when they had finished did he tell them what they had really eaten. He claims to have proven his point, but his wife and daughter have not eaten mountain oysters since, even though they thoroughly enjoyed them and readily admit that they did.

Naturally total agreement does not exist among Potuckans about what is and is not edible. Some prefer or will eat only freshwater, some saltwater fish; some will not eat lamb or mutton; and all have tried the taboo foods at some point in their lives. To further complicate matters, some foods are held in esteem because they are believed to be disliked by outsiders or "foreigners." Hog jowls, souse, chitterlings, head cheese, collards, cornbread, and fatback are all ammunition in the modern War

Between the States. Yankees in particular are chided for not liking these foods. Even though many of these foods are difficult to obtain now and are no longer “po’ food,” they are still sought out. Their contemporary value lies not in their cheapness but in their taste, and in their cultural value as indicators that the tastes of Potuckans differ from that of outsiders. I have known Potuckans to send packages of salted hogs’ tails and feet to Northern acquaintances as a joke. They expect the packages to both bewilder and disgust.

Not only do the raw ingredients of meals distinguish the Potuckan from the outsider, but also the cooking methods. One cook told me that, in contrast to Yankees, Potuckans “overcook meat and undercook bread.” As a general description this seems accurate. Locals do not like meat to show any pinkness, and blue steak or steak tartare are unthinkable. Yankees are believed to eat “hard” bread, while Potuckans favor lightly cooked breads, such as corn bread or spoon bread.

Potuckans also compare their modes of cooking vegetables to those of Northerners. Green vegetables, both leafy and leguminous, are boiled for an hour or more with “seasoning,” that is, fatback, ham bone, or salt pork. Starchy foods, such as potatoes or corn dumplings, are often cooked in with the green vegetables. The seasoning meat is served along with the vegetables it has flavored.

The foregoing discussion also points up the central role of the hog in local cooking practices. In the local dialect the word *meat* refers specifically to ‘salt pork,’ rather than to ‘the edible tissue of land animals,’ which is referred to by using narrower terms, such as “lamb” or “beef.” Scarcely a single meal passes in which some part of the hog is not employed. Lard is the principal cooking fat, cured pork is the chief vegetable seasoning, rendered bacon fat is used as a sauce for salt fish, and the various cuts of pork are treated to every kind of cooking process or preparation—boiling, frying, baking, roasting, stewing, smoking, salting, drying, and so on. This reflects both the versatility of the hog as food, and the fact that so many people kept hogs at one time.

Although only a handful of families now raise hogs, the local diet retains the usages of former times. What was once largely a pragmatic consideration is now an aesthetic choice. Even with dramatic escalation in the price of these traditionally “po’ foods” eradicating economic reasons for buying them, they are still purchased because they are essential elements in most meals. Some local cooks periodically prepare “po’ food” to evoke memories of the past. One locally renowned cook, for example, made a dish called “haslet stew” at the end of the fall. The stew is basically hog’s heart and liver and was originally made at hog killing time to use up these perishable items. The practical need to make the dish is gone, but the taste for it and the powerful memories that it evokes remain.

The tremendous cultural significance that cooking plays in these people's lives is matched by the central role of many forms of food sharing. The aesthetics of cooking clearly demarcate insiders and outsiders, while food sharing strengthens ties between the insiders. Food sharing, for heuristic purposes can be broken up into three categories: sharing raw food, sharing cooked food, and communal feasting. Each of these activities involves different social groups and social networks.

The sharing of raw food is almost exclusively a male occupation since men are its primary producers. The men who plant kitchen gardens plant considerably more than their own families can consume. When time comes to harvest his produce, a man will take large shares to the homes of kin and close friends, sometimes giving away many times more than he keeps for his own use. He gives the vegetables directly to the woman in charge of cooking in the household to which he is making the present.

Watermen, because of the nature of their jobs, frequently have various kinds of fish and shellfish to give away. Gill net and haul seine fishermen always catch fish which they cannot sell, either because they are classified as sport fish and hence are not legally sellable or because the dealer does not want them on a particular day. Crab fishermen often have crabs that are too small for the market or a number of soft-shell crabs that do not make up a large enough weight to interest a dealer. All of these items are given away. Because the waterman has an almost daily supply of gifts, he need not limit his munificence to kin and close friends, who would soon tire of an endless diet of fish. Anyone who expresses an interest can be the beneficiary of a fisherman's largesse.

Sport fishermen have varied interests in the fish that they catch. Surf fishermen will, as a rule, bring home all of the fish that they catch but will give away most or all of them to kin and close friends. They will keep only bluefish and drum with any regularity. Freshwater fishermen rarely bring fish home because they consider most of what they catch to be inedible. They enjoy fishing for largemouth bass because of the fight that they put up, but having won the battle they immediately throw the fish back. If in the process of fishing for bass they hook a speckled perch or a panfish, they will keep it to be given away later.

The process of sharing hunted meats has two stages. The men on a hunt divide the game between themselves, and later they each may share their portions with other people. Deer hunters make a great ceremony of butchering a slain animal, and they spend a considerable amount of time apportioning the meat according to prescribed rules. The hunter who actually makes the kill gets first choice. He will take either a sirloin or a rump roast. Next, a choice piece is reserved for the owner of the land on which the kill is made. Then, those who have made special contributions to the hunt, such as providing dogs or transportation, make their choice. The other hunters divide the rest of the meat. Preferences are generally

hindquarter cuts first, then forequarter excluding the ribs, and finally, ribs. Someone may take the heart and liver to make a hunter's stew, but this practice is not as common as it once was. The same principles hold true for the division of the spoils of duck and quail hunting. Making a significant contribution to the hunt entitles one to a fair share. Often the owner of the duck blind or the owner/trainer of a pair of field dogs will be given the entire kill of the day to redistribute among his fellow hunters or to keep if he wishes. If the birds are small, such as teal, bufflehead, or quail, they will most likely be kept as a single bag and given to whoever wants them.

A hunter may choose to take his allotted share of game and then give it away to a relative or friend. Such is his prerogative once the meat has passed into his possession. Once he has given it away, however, it should not be redistributed any more in its raw state. The woman to whom he offers the meat must either cook it or refuse to accept it. Having cooked it, she is then at liberty to parcel it out at her discretion. Until she invests some of her own labor in it, she has not fully taken possession of the meat.

Cooking the main meal of the day is a time-consuming enterprise. The actual preparation in the kitchen can easily take three or more hours, and there are often advance chores, such as plucking and drawing fowl or scaling and gutting fish, that prolong matters further. Few short cuts are employed, and the idea of using store prepared foods is considered laughable, because they are judged to be of inferior quality and freshness and outrageously expensive.

Family meals in Potuck are not prepared with a rigidly fixed number of diners in mind. The approximate number is known, but allowance is made for the possibility that someone may drop in at supper time. Good neighborliness requires that a woman invite to supper anyone who is in the house at meal time. To refuse such an invitation is difficult and often considered an insult, unless the visitor can clearly demonstrate that he has a previous engagement for dinner elsewhere. A woman's generosity at the meal table is unrelated to her thrift or parsimony in other spheres. Some women who are characterized as mean or stingy are unstinting providers of food. This kind of generosity is, in fact, not thought of locally as generosity but as *de rigueur* normal behavior.

Although households in Potuck consist of nuclear families, a family meal is not cooked in each separate home every night. One matriarch cooks for her daughters and all of their families, until she becomes too old or infirm to continue. Many older women told me that they did not learn how to cook until after their mothers had died. This behavior not only helps maintain intergenerational ties, but also relieves the financial burden and work load of younger married couples. Thus, it is to this matriarch that raw food is given, and from her kitchen that gifts of food proceed.

Some cooks are renowned for specialty items which they prepare. One, for example, makes clabber biscuits that make many locals drool just to talk about. As opportunity arises cooks will make large quantities of their specialties and distribute them around the town. A batch of goodies is spread as far afield as it will go. Particularly favored foods may be subject to the same kind of distribution although on a small scale. For example, a woman may cook a venison roast from a hunter as supper for her own household, but also reserve enough to send a taste to a few friends.

When the matriarchal cook of an extended family is sick, it is not a complete disaster since someone else in the group always takes over, no matter how inexpertly. Under these circumstances, though, close friends or kin will send cooked food to the household to help out. Large stock pots of thick, rich soups are the commonest gifts of this kind, along with bowls of greasy greens with their accompanying potatoes, dumplings, and "meat." The family can choose to make a meal of these dishes by themselves, or add their own contributions to them. Should a family member die, the local cooks closest to the family cook prepare an elaborate meal on the day of the funeral. The centerpiece of this meal is a boiled ham bought by subscription.

Throughout the year there are a number of occasions for communal feasting, that is, large gatherings of social groups outside of the family home for the purposes of cooking and eating great quantities of food. Some of these affairs are sponsored by the church and have the overt purpose of raising money. Others are most definitely not religious events.

The "young people," the men and women ranging in age from the upper teens to mid-thirties, sometimes turn surf fishing and deer hunting into excuses for feasting parties. In high summer when the saltwater fish are running well, a group of young people will commandeer a section of beach land in a secluded spot accessible only by boat. They set up gill nets in the surf and then collect all of the driftwood that they can find to build a cooking fire. The net is checked regularly, and the fish caught in it taken up. These are scaled and gutted on the beach and mounted on long skewers for toasting over the fire. Each person toasts his own fish and makes up a meal with cole slaw and hush puppies contributed by various members of the group. All of this is washed down with generous amounts of beer and whiskey. The party goes on well into the night and is frequently the scene of activities frowned upon by the respectable members of the community.

In late fall, during the deer hunting season, young deer hunters may reserve a carcass or two for a barbecue. They build a roasting rack on which they place the cleaned deer, split down the belly and splayed open. A slow fire is kept burning under the rack for the better part of a day,

and towards the end of the process a hot barbecue sauce is liberally smeared on the meat. When fully cooked the meat is hewn roughly from the bones and served with cornbread and boiled vegetables. Beer and whiskey are, again, in plentiful supply.

These kinds of feasts are clearly beyond the pale of the church, which advocates temperance. It is not surprising to learn that the "young people" are not avid churchgoers. Traditionally in Potuck, as in many parts of the rural South, the ages between late teens and middle thirties are a time of free-wheeling activities. Marriage and child raising end this riotous period, and the new parents frequently join the church.

The church has two annual feasts that serve a function similar to the young people's parties (that is, having a good time together), although they are ostensibly fund raisers. Fund raising seems only an excuse for partying since the church members provide the raw materials and labor and they also buy the cooked food. The same amount of money could be raised by asking the congregation to dig a little deeper one Sunday, but there would be no fun in that.

In mid-May the chicken supper is held. The meal consists of a quarter chicken fried, potato salad, string beans, cornbread, pickles, and a slice of cake for dessert. All of the food comes from donations by members and prominent local people. The donations are determined by a committee elected for that purpose. They try to involve as many people as possible without appearing to impose and without spreading their net so widely that vital functions go untended. Donations are grouped roughly as follows:

1. Two 3 lb. chickens quartered; 40 women.
2. $\frac{1}{2}$ gallon of potato salad: 30 women.
3. One pan of cornbread: 20 women.
4. One cake: 20 women.
5. \$3 donation for sundries: 30 men and women.
6. Odds and ends (salt and pepper, ice, etc.): 10 men and women.

Two categories—potato salad and \$3 donations—are flexible. The committee puts some people's names in these categories who may or may not contribute, or who may not have much to do with the church but who might, with a little encouragement, become more active. All of the tasks, installing cookers, preparing and cooking the chicken, making up plates, and so on are also parcelled out, mostly to reliable workers in the church.

Most church members will come to the supper if they are able. There is also a take-out service for the housebound or those who cannot get to the clubhouse for some reason. On the night of the chicken supper almost everyone in Potuck will eat one of these suppers.

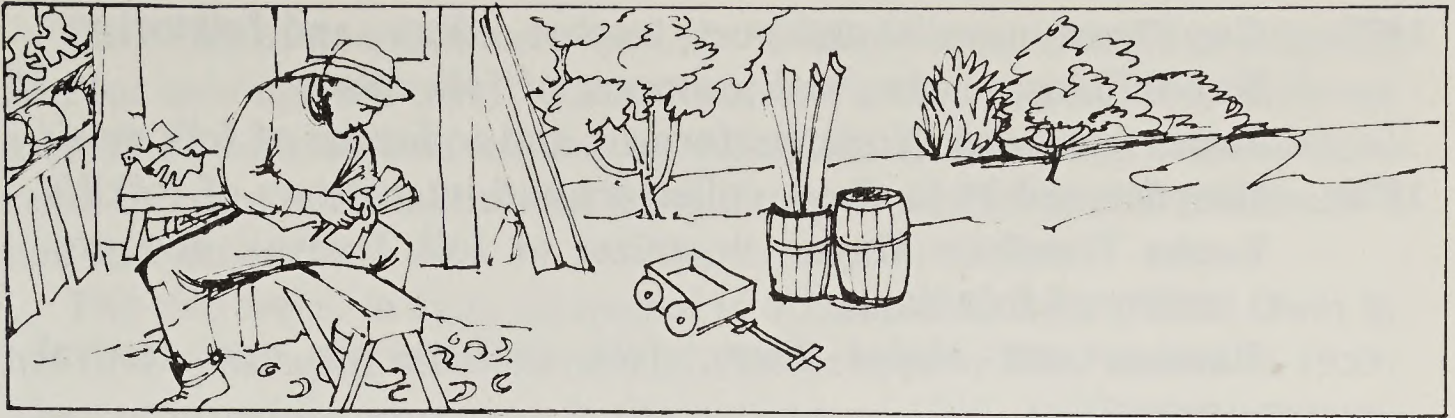
The October harvest sale is the biggest event of the church calendar. The sale is an all-day affair with a country store selling knick-knacks, utensils, and a wide variety of general merchandise; a clothing store; a

bake sale and crafts table; an auction; a hot dog and hamburger stall; and children's games. But the major attraction is a home-made Brunswick stew served at lunch time.

The preparation of the stew spans three days and is an event in itself. On the Thursday before the sale, designated women procure the ingredients. Twelve boiling fowl are killed, plucked, drawn and jointed, and sixteen pounds of salt pork are diced. On Friday the crew of men who are to prepare the stew light a fire in the churchyard and on it boil a little water in a cauldron. Then in goes the chicken and salt pork, and the whole is covered with water. The mixture is simmered for four hours, or until the chickens is in shreds and the salt pork has all melted. A small knot of older men sit around the cauldron while the meat is cooking, taking turns to stir the mixture with the sawn-off blade of an old poling oar, and reminiscing. The mixture is then ladled into large pans and allowed to cool. When cold enough to handle, the bones are removed and the whole "mess" stored for the night.

On Saturday morning the fire is rekindled and several gallons of water warmed in the cauldron. The boned chicken and pork mixture is returned, and butter beans, corn, canned tomatoes, chopped onions, diced potatoes, and seasonings (red and black pepper, and salt) are added and stirred in well. At first the stew is quite soupy, but after four or five hours of slow cooking it thickens considerably. At about noon the stew is ready to eat. It is served by women who make up plates of stew, corn-bread, and cole slaw.

Food sharing is a valuable social medium of communication in Potuck. People whose work and daily activities keep them segregated and isolated can make contact with one another through the gift of food. The giver chooses the length and depth of communication, which varies from person to person and event to event. In all of these affairs it is important to understand that food is *shared* rather than *exchanged*. No attempt is made to honor strict reciprocity, and many local men and women are renowned as constant givers rather than receivers. In anthropological vocabulary the relations set up in this way are "incorporative" as opposed to "transactional." Food sharing brings the people of Potuck together by stressing the value of unrequited gifts and services. Incorporative relations are not sullied by the petty or niggardly aspects of reciprocal exchange. The great contemporary problem for these people is that small farming, fishing, and gardening are proving less and less viable in today's global economy, so that factory jobs and supermarket shopping are increasingly enticing. If the men no longer act as primary producers of food, then the whole social network based on food sharing may collapse.



The Brown-Hudson Award

The Brown-Hudson Award was established in 1970 to honor two distinguished folklorists and members of the North Carolina Folklore Society, the late Frank C. Brown and the late Arthur Palmer Hudson. Both had served as the Society's Secretary-Treasurer, Dr. Brown from 1913 to 1944 and Dr. Hudson from 1945 to 1966. Dr. Hudson was also the founder and editor until 1966 of *North Carolina Folklore*.

Our state's highest folklore prize, the Award recognizes a resident or native of North Carolina who has contributed in a special way to the appreciation of regional traditions. Past winners of Brown-Hudson Awards are:

- 1971 **Lucy Calista Morgan**, director of the Penland School of Crafts
Paul Green, playwright, teacher, and collector of local tales
George P. Wilson, professor and folklorist
- 1972 **Artus Monroe Moser**, collector, folk musician, and singer
Mary Myrtle Cornwell, promoter of folk crafts
Joseph D. Clark, folklorist and professor
- 1973 **Bertha Hodges Cook**, maker of traditional knotted bedspreads
Bernice Kelly Harris, journalist, playwright, and collector of
folklore
Virgil L. Sturgil, performer and collector of mountain music
- 1974 **W. Amos Abrams**, professor, editor, and collector of folklore
Edd and Nettie Presnell, dulcimer makers and wood carvers
Benjamin E. Washburn, writer, historian, and folklore
collector
- 1975 **Richard Walser**, writer, editor, and folklorist
Cratis D. Williams, teacher, writer, and performer
“Doc” and Merle Watson, folk singers and musicians
- 1976 **Ruth Jewell**, teacher and promoter of folk dancing
F. Roy Johnson, writer and publisher of folklore books
John Parris, journalist and collector of folklore

- 1977 **Guy Owen**, novelist and poet, teacher, editor, and folklorist
Kay Wilkins, teacher and promoter of folk dance
James and Lessie York, performers and collectors of folk music
- 1978 **Grayden and M.C. Paul**, collectors and interpreters of folklife
Leona Trantham Hayes, organizer of folk festivals and promoter of folk dance
Herman and Mabel Estes, folk craftspeople and festival organizers
- 1979 **Dorothy Cole Auman**, folk potter and scholar of regional pottery traditions
Thad Stem, Jr., writer and folklorist
Rogers V. Whitener, writer, teacher, and folklorist
- 1980 **Daniel Watkins Patterson**, teacher, writer, and folklorist
Burlon B. Craig, folk potter
Stanley Hicks, instrument maker, storyteller, folk musician, and dancer
- 1981 **Thomas Jefferson Jarrell**, folk fiddler and teacher
Mary Mintz, Richard Lebovitz, Elizabeth Roberson, and Their Students, teachers, writers, and collectors of folklore
- 1982 **Etta Baker and Cora Phillips**, folk musicians
Ovid Williams, writer and teacher
Holger Olof Nygard, writer, teacher, and folklorist

1983 Brown-Hudson Awards

At its seventy-second annual meeting, in November 1983 in Raleigh, the North Carolina Folklore Society presented Brown-Hudson Folklore Awards to Ora and Willard Watson, and Joe Wilson.

Ora & Willard Watson

When Ralph Rinzler, Folklife Director of the Smithsonian Institution, came South in the late fifties in search of oldtime music, he ran into a special bit of musical fortune: Doc Watson.

But the good fortune didn't end with Doc and his music; it led to Willard and Ora Watson and Appalachian crafts. And elsewhere, of course. "Everywhere I found traditional music," says Rinzler, "I also found traditional crafts."

But Willard and Ora were special. "Willard seemed to have a special feel for carving folk toys," Rinzler notes, "a kind of intuitive touch not associated with outside influences. And Ora—she had the most natural sense of color combinations in her quilting of any mountain craftsman I had run across."

The two were, in fact, so special to Rinzler that he included them in his first contingent of craftsmen at the Newport Folk Festival in 1959. They returned for an encore in the summer of 1967, and in the intervening years appeared four times at the American Folklife Festival in Washington.

Here capital visitors not only discovered Willard's folk toys, but learned to appreciate his flatfoot dancing. Janice Whitener, who took craftsmen from Watauga, Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey counties to Washington in 1967, recalls Willard's debut: "The Preservation Hall Jazz Band had set up on an outdoor stage [on the Mall] and had swung into 'When the Saints Go Marching In.' That was more than Willard's feet could stand. Out of the crowd he plunged, clambered up on the stage, and went into a flatfoot shuffle. The crowd went wild."

Willard, now pushing seventy-nine, doesn't follow his dancing inclination as frequently as in days past, but let Cousin Doc play a concert in the Boone area, and you can bet Willard will be on stage strutting his stuff before the evening is over.

But neither Willard nor Ora has much time for "foolishness." Both are too busy with their crafts.

"I never imagined my quilts would lead to anything like this," says Ora. "I remember when Willard and I were married fifty-eight years ago, I was mainly concerned with turning out the three quilts per bed that were expected of any mountain girl setting up housekeeping back then. Now I've made so many that I've lost count."

Along the way Ora has run the gamut of patterns. "The first one I ever pieced up," she says, "was what we call a Gentleman's Bow. Since that time I've done the Old Rail Fence, the Log Cabin, the Dresden Plate, the Drunkard's Path, the Monkey Wrench, the Norway Pine, the Lone Star, the Bethlehem Star—that's probably the hardest to do—the Crazy Quilt, and others."

Willard's craft history runs a close parallel to that of Ora. "I remember the first time I was asked to make anything for sale was during the time of the wagon train [in the 1950's] when Clyde Greene asked me to make some toy wagon yokes. I got a dollar apiece for them. Later on I began to make dancing dolls, peckin' chickens, doll beds, walking mules, bouncing pigs, farm wagons and tools, and a passel of other things. Now I'm busy all the time, but I still can't keep anything at hand."

Ora, like Willard, recalls that her first crafts went cheap: "As I remember, I sold my first double quilts for ten dollars a piece; then fif-

teen, up to thirty-five, and when it got to fifty I really thought I was getting rich. Now I do considerably better, but I'm doing more queen- and king-sized quilts, and I imagine if you figured it out on an hourly basis I still would be working pretty cheap."

There are other rewards for the Watsons, however, and one of them is today as we of the North Carolina Folklore Society honor them for their work in preserving traditional mountain culture. Ora and Willard Watson by their excellence in traditional crafts are splendid recipients of Brown-Hudson Folklore Awards.

—*Rogers V. Whitener*
Appalachian State University

Joseph Thomas Wilson

Joe Wilson is Executive Director of the National Council for the Traditional Arts, a job he has happily pursued since 1976. The NCTA is a new name for an old organization known formerly as the National Folk Festival Association. Founded in 1934 by Sarah Gertrude Knott, the NFFA produced the nation's first multi-ethnic folk music and dance festival, which is still presented annually in cities around the country. When Joe took the reins of the organization seven years ago, he did more than change its name. First, he made certain that the National Folk Festival supported and presented the best traditional artists in America. Second, he made this national organization, headquartered in Washington, *more* national. The festival, once the chief concern of the NFFA, became merely one of dozens of programs and projects the NCTA organizes and sponsors every year. Tours featuring the finest traditional musicians and dancers of America's ethnic and folk communities—including Appalachian, Irish, Yiddish, and Swedish—have played to appreciative audiences in every region of the country. NCTA also produces films, videotapes, recordings, and radio programs and consults widely. It has been instrumental in developing folklife programs for the world's fairs at Knoxville and New Orleans. All of these activities are accomplished with a very small budget and staff.

Joe demonstrated a fondness for folk music at a tender age, having been reared in a culturally rich and scenically beautiful section of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Born in Ashe County, North Carolina, he lived for a time in Sutherland community, which was named for his mother's people who settled there many years before. Sutherland is located in northern Watauga County, a few miles below the Tennessee line. Here,

Joe's daddy purchased a harmonica at the local store and learned to play a few favorite tunes. As soon as he would let loose with "Old Joe Clark," young Joseph, clad in diapers, would hit the floor dancing—of course, barefoot style.

Not long thereafter, the family moved to Trade, Tennessee, located between Boone and Mountain City on Highway 421, where Joe went to school. His interest in mountain and country music deepened as he grew older. Joe was delighted when his family obtained their first radio and listened attentively to programs like "Farm and Fun Time" on Bristol's WCYB, where he heard groups such as the Stanley Brothers and the Blue Sky Boys. He even tried his hand at performing, joining a band called the Country Cousins while in high school.

Joe was intensely curious about the people and the world around him. He's always been a voracious reader. His brother, James Walter, recalls many a night when Joe lay propped up on the sofa lost in a book. Sometimes Joe would still be there reading when James got up in the morning.

Joe is particularly passionate about history, especially local history. There's nothing more fun than to ramble around the backroads of Watauga and Johnson counties with Joe and soak up his remarkable commentary. He knows the name of every hill and hollow, the identity of every bootlegger, the wherabouts of every graveyard, and the family histories of most of the folks planted in them. And if you're in good enough shape, he'll take you to the top of Long Hope Mountain to see a cranberry bog that naturalists insist shouldn't occur south of New Jersey.

Besides being something of a walking encyclopedia, almanac, and bureau of the census, Joe has a flair and facility for writing which he frequently puts to good use. For example, he called upon his skill not only to make good grades in school, but to help pay for his education. He once offered a paper writing service to his fellow students at Lees McRae College, charging \$5 for an "A" paper and \$3 for a "B." Since that time Joe has written countless articles, record notes and reviews, educational materials, and a recent book on folk festival organization, *Folk Festivals*, published by the University of Tennessee Press.

Joe possesses several other notable talents which he amply displayed in his youth. Two in particular—acting and fighting—serve him well in his present position where he is a master of the folkways of bureaucracy. Joe was indeed an excellent young actor appearing in numerous school plays and community theater productions.

I won't go into detail about his fighting prowess, only to say that he knew how to take care of himself and when necessary to look out for his brothers and sister. His style of fighting is more cerebral than physical nowadays, but it is no less effective defending the NCTA budget.

It is hard to imagine the National Council for the Traditional Arts without Joe Wilson or Joe without the NCTA. What did he do in the years prior to 1976? The answer is what didn't he do! Joe worked at an amazing number and variety of both blue and white collar jobs ranging from bulldozing to raising money for hospitals and colleges.

But now he is truly where he belongs, and we hope he will stay. There are so many stories which illustrate his commitment and the incalculable value of his good works. I'll close with just one. A few years ago Joe led an American folk music tour to the Far East under the sponsorship of the U.S. State Department. While visiting a refugee camp in Thailand, he met a troupe of Cambodian musicians and dancers who preserve in their breathtaking performances much of the history and culture of their ancient civilization. They are called the Khmer Classical Ballet, and they fled one of the most murderous political regimes in history—a regime which sought to destroy Cambodia's cultural heritage as a matter of policy. When Joe returned home he helped them resettle in a Washington suburb and encouraged them to reassemble the ballet. When they were ready, he presented them to awe-struck audiences at the National Folk Festival. Until that time no American cultural organizations would take an interest in them. Thanks to Joe and the NCTA this great art of the Cambodian people, which has been performed for centuries, will not perish.

It is everyone's good fortune that Joe has extended the love of the native culture of his own people, the folk of the North Carolina Blue Ridge, to folk communities throughout the world. I am certain that Arthur Palmer Hudson and Frank C. Brown would be especially proud to know that Joseph Thomas Wilson has received the award named in their honor.

—George Holt
Director of Folklife Programs
North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources

This issue of the *North Carolina Folklore Journal* completes the subscription year for 1983 memberships in the North Carolina Folklore Society. Volume 32, No. 1, is now in production and when published will be mailed to all 1984 members of the Society. Its tentative publication date is September 1984.

The mailing label on this issue includes a date marking the expiration of your membership in the North Carolina Folklore Society. To renew your membership, please send a \$6 check to the North Carolina Folklore Society, c/o Department of English, Appalachian State University, Boone, NC 28608. If necessary, include correction of your mailing label.

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